

BRITISH ARTISTS

MORLAND AND
IBBETSON

Edited by S. C. KAINES SMITH, M.A.

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S. C. KAINES SMITH, M.A., M.B.E.

*The volumes at present arranged comprise the following,
here given in (approximately) chronological order.*

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on the Newcastle group. |
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OTHERS IN PREPARATION.



Victoria and Albert Museum

FISHERMEN HAULING IN A BOAT

GEORGE MORLAND

BRITISH ARTISTS

EDITED BY

S. C. KAINES SMITH, M.A.

MORLAND AND IBBETSON

By

B. L. K. HENDERSON, D.LIT.



LONDON

PHILIP ALLAN & CO.

QUALITY COURT

4F
Sm 66
v. 22

First Published in 1923.

Made and Printed in Great Britain
by Southampton Times Ltd., Southampton.

FOREWORD.

WHAT the subtle connection is, that seems to exist in the minds of many, between landscape painting and strong drink, I have never been able to discover; but that it does exist appears to be incontrovertible. Morland dubbed himself a drunken dog; Ibbetson, presumably because his art bears a superficial resemblance to that of his contemporary and some-time associate, has, with some, shared his ill-fame for potency in potting; Wilson has suffered sadly in repute because of a reported predilection for porter—that he preferred it to gin is not remembered in his favour; and Turner is credited, not only with using beer as a medium, but with the stimulation of his genius by the liberal internal application of brown sherry. All of which matters not at all to those who can revere a man's memory for the sake of what he did, rather than for what he was, or what he drank.

The attitude of the public at large, and of the *cognoscenti* in particular, at the end of the eighteenth century, was enough to make any landscape painter take to drink—and, quite seriously, this may have something to do with the legend which attaches itself to the names of so many of them. Of course, it would be useless to pretend that Morland was a teetotaler; Dr. Henderson can do no more for his client than plead extenuating circumstances, and ask for clemency on the score of public service. But this he does with eloquent persuasion, and points to the fact, so singular in the light of the conditions under which so much of Morland's work was produced, that its outstanding note is a kind of simple idealism, and that, however commonplace or even sordid his

subject, he never reveals a commonplace or sordid point of view with regard to it.

From a slightly different angle of vision, we may see in the art of Morland an unconscious reflection of the unconscious hypocrisy of the day in which he lived. Ugliness and evil and filth were not to be denied, but simply ignored. There was so much of them about, that beauty had very little place among the real experiences of life, so that art—the art that portrayed contemporary life, at any rate—to be beautiful, was bound to be false and artificial. The landscape painter, who came nearer to the study and contemplation of realities than any other, was obliged to be consciously false in his rendering of human life, if he were to preserve any appearance of harmony between it and its natural setting; and the more he knew of the dregs of life, the more he was bound to avoid the suggestion of their squalor in his art. Having no grounds whatever for satisfaction in the contemplation of man, as embodied in himself, the more sensible was he to the unspoiled beauty of nature.

The life and the work both of Morland and of Ibbetson constitute a bitter commentary upon the gross commercial dishonesty and moral cruelty of their time—a time in which almost any painter who was not a painter of commissioned portraits was the prey of dealers and the butt of critics, a debt-ridden wretch across whose path lay the dark shadow of the Fleet. The wonder is not so much that some of them succumbed, as Morland did, but that any of them survived; and still more, that even those who failed to stay the course, could yet retain enough of their inborn consciousness of the glory of God's world, to find therein a means of expression of their better selves, and to leave behind them a legacy of its beauty, the only beauty that adorned their lives.

I am indebted, in the preparation of this volume, to the Trustees and Directors of the National

Gallery and of the National Gallery of British Art ; to the Director and Secretary of the Victoria and Albert Museum ; to the Trustees of the National Museum of Wales and to the Director of the Department of Fine Art in that Museum ; to the Curator of the Castle Museum, Nottingham ; to Mr. Victor Rienaecker ; to Mr. Wilfrid L. Phillips ; and to Mr. William Permain, for permission to reproduce the pictures which illustrate the book. Individual acknowledgment of this kindness appears upon the illustrations themselves. Space is too limited to allow of the acknowledgment here of the many forms which help of other kinds has taken, and of the many sources from which it has been derived ; but, as in the case of other volumes of this series, the appendices containing lists of the pictures of these artists in public galleries are compiled from information which has been given me at no small pains by the many Directors and Curators of the Galleries concerned. For this, as for much other assistance, I should like to express my thanks.

S. O. K. S.

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MORLAND.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

MEN travel towards fame by different roads. As we read the life of George Morland we cannot fail to be struck by the absence of the spiritual in his nature, and this absence is confirmed by a study of his art. He is, indeed, of the earth, earthy. He is the Crabbe of the world of artists; the delineator of the humble poor. To make another comparison, just what Charles Dickens achieved, a generation later, by his descriptions of the middle classes of his lifetime, Morland by his art accomplished for the 'lower,' or poorer classes at the close of the 18th century. His pictures illustrate English life and customs as they existed along the road, in the farmhouse, in the inn, in the humble abode of the peasant. Where his sympathies abounded, there his art flourished. Yet however much one may desire to become George Morland's apologist, it is impossible to excuse much of the evil of his life. That is admitted completely. But, before a word of his life is given, it is seriously necessary to offer a counsel of warning to the reflective reader, and lodge

a protest against the easy manner in which an educated nation like ours accepts a current rumour and hugs the acceptable falsehood to the welcoming breast. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him." Probably there is no other instance of the life of a great man where this saying has been so fully illustrated. In fact, after the perusal of contemporary and subsequent biographies, the impartial reader is left rubbing his head in utter perplexity, and asking "Is this story true, or is it false?"

The desire of the present biographer is to avoid all falsity, and narrate, in the briefest manner, the simple truth as far as that is discernible. Charming little stories of Morland's childhood, stirring anecdotes of his youth, morbid accounts of later life, divulged by his chroniclers with the sanctimoniousness of Uriah Heep and the garrulity of Mrs. Gamp, are to be carefully cut away. Those who seek them may find them in the pages of Dawe or Hassell, Fuseli or Cunningham. These men, especially Fuseli, sowed the seed, and the abundant harvest is apparent in the pages of irresponsible periodicals down to this very day. James Ward, R.A., the brother of William Ward, Morland's brother-in-law, speaks as follows: "Of the many books written there are many falsehoods and many truths. I believe that Dawe's *Life of Morland* is the

most correct, because while he was writing it he brought his MS. to me and my brother, and we took much time and pains to correct it and remove mis-statements. Fuseli's is only an opportunity of sporting his own imagination and displaying his wit.* Hassell's is the work of a vulgar man and one of Morland's picture-dealers, and is full of nonsense and crammed with falsehoods. Allan Cunningham's is the effusion of ignorance. No writer ever took more pains to make himself appear a candid writer and never one that proved himself more partial."

George Morland's family is said to have descended from the brother of the famous Sir Samuel Morland, 'diplomatist, mathematician, and inventor.' Samuel and his brother were the sons of the Reverend Thomas Morland, Rector of Sulhampstead-Banister in Berkshire. This is no place to follow the career of the eminent diplomat and scientist. If one recalls that he was the man sent by Cromwell to protest to the Duke of Savoy against the massacre of the Waldenses, the 'murdered Saints' of Milton's Sonnet; that he was created a baronet at the Restoration; that his experiments in hydrostatics and hydraulics led him to improve the fire-engine and the pump ('he raised water from the Thames sixty feet

* Fuseli had a grudge against Morland, who had ridiculed one of his pictures.

above the top of Windsor Castle at the rate of sixty barrels per hour by eight men '); that medals struck in his honour still exist at the British Museum; that he was the author of seven learned works upon scientific subjects; these isolated facts must suffice to illustrate his eminence and native ability. He was married four times, but left only one son, who in 1716 died without issue.

The history of the generation between Samuel's brother and George Morland's grandfather is vague. George Morland's family were told that they had only to claim the title to obtain it, and we shall see later what was the opinion of the artist with regard to titles. We come upon Morland's immediate ancestry when we meet with George Henry Morland, the *genre* painter, who was born early in the 18th century. He lived on the south side of St. James's Square and painted some well-known pictures such as *The Pretty Ballad Singer*, *The Fair Nun Unmasked* and *The Oyster Woman*. His son, Henry Robert Morland (1730?–1797) became a well-known portrait painter, who painted portraits of Garrick as Richard III, of George III, and perhaps of the beautiful sisters the Misses Gunning, the younger of whom married James, Duke of Hamilton with 'a ring of the bed-curtain' at half past twelve at night. It has been suggested, however, that these pictures, formerly in

the possession of Lord Mansfield at Caenwood, Highgate, are portraits of Henry Morland's daughter. There is certainly a strong trace of French ancestry in the features. Henry Morland's wife was a French woman.

At South Kensington there is a portrait of Mrs. Ward (Morland's sister) which, while it conveys a curious sense of likeness to Rowlandson's sketch of the jaunty young Morland, which we have described elsewhere, also suggests forcibly the French descent of the subject, thus confirming the impression conveyed by the work of Henry Robert, the father.

These two pictures by Henry Morland, now in the Tate Gallery, are clear indication of his genius. His work is according to the fashion of sham simplicity as started by Rousseau and developed by Watteau—elegant ladies dressed as dairymaids, laundresses in silk and satins; but no one can stand before *The Laundry Maid Washing* or *The Laundry Maid Ironing*, and fail to realise their striking merit. In the former, the poise of the head, the strong contrast that is effected by the black velvet ribbon around the neck with the pure whiteness of the skin beneath, the gentle swell of the bosom 'white as the hawthorn bud,' and the shapeliness of the long and delicate hands that hold the linen, form an alluring whole

that grips the attention of the spectator. The graceful folds of the skirt of the brocaded frock become the figure of this woman whose features so strongly suggest French nationality. These studies evince that studied and careful finish often sought for in vain in the son's hurried and powerful work. The genius of George Morland broke away from this portraiture of an established school, yet, indubitably, it took with it the strain in the blood, that gift of heredity which so often and so strangely passes from generation to generation.

James Ward says of Henry Morland: 'Old Morland always appeared to me as a broken down old gentleman. His wife (Maria) was of an opposite character. She was like a little strutting bantam cock.' Possessed of a small independent property she crowed over her husband most completely. She brought into the world three sons and two daughters. The family lived in Leicester Square, and later in the Haymarket, where George was born on the 26th June 1763.

Of George Morland's early childhood nothing is known, save what is told by anecdotes which may, or may not, be reliable. He is said to have shown his powers by the age of three; at ten he appears as an honorary exhibitor at the Royal Academy. There is, however, one anecdote of these early days

that is well worth repeating. Mr. West (later P.R.A.) called on the elder Morland, when George was about 4 years old, and found the child with nothing on but his shirt. West spoke to him, but George did not answer. "Have you no tongue?" asked the President. George put it out and grinned. At that unfortunate moment in came the father, and seeing the gesture, kicked his son "on the breech" and sent him away! *

At twelve George modelled asses, dogs, etc., in clay. He made a complete model of a frigate. At eighteen he was proficient on the violin. He loved dissecting mice, which he did so cleverly as not to distort a single bone. We shall consider elsewhere the training he received from his father's hands. Here it is necessary to comment upon the severity of the discipline to which he was subjected, and the likelihood of its ill effects upon an ardent boy, possessed of ample physical energy. James Ward, commenting upon the children of Mr. and Mrs. Morland, says that the mother had a partiality for George and Sophia, that the elder of the sisters was a most exemplary character, and this was the more praiseworthy, as she was brought up under the greatest temptations to the contrary. One son went off to sea, and, having returned home once, never

* Blagden gives this as a reliable anecdote.

repeated his visit. The other brother, Henry, opened a Coffee House in Dean Street, and became the most constant dealer in his brother's pictures.

The budding artist was forced to rise at five in the morning and make copies of such pictures as Gainsborough's *Fighting Dogs*, Dutch and Flemish Masters, Fuseli's *Nightmare*, Reynold's *Garrick*; of his own accord he illustrated Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, ancient ballads, such as *Auld Robin Gray*, and *Margaret's Ghost*, and *Young Roger*, and he drew political satires. His one recreation was to take, on Sundays, long country walks around London, his only food often being a pennyworth of gingerbread. There is a suggestion that his father made money from the sale of the boy's copies, but, later on, George, realising this fact, managed, at nightfall, to drop some of his work into the hands of young assistants, and then spent the proceeds in frolic and self-indulgence, and that the father, seeing this tendency, of his own accord encouraged his son to indulge his low tastes. We must dismiss many of these early stories as tittle-tattle; but the facts remain. The mother was foolishly partial and indulgent, the father unnecessarily severe. Just as the young German Emperor, Henry IV, is said to have suffered from the alternating discipline of the bishops Anno and Adalbert, so George Morland

experienced now the foolish attention and probably equally foolish advice of the 'strutting bantam cock,' and now the severity and solitude imposed by a well meaning and clever father, who, in spite of his cleverness was, perhaps, quite unable to enter as a companion into the mysterious realm of this boy's childhood. Apart from all else, we can see in these circumstances every inducement towards the creation of that obliquity of moral character afterwards so clearly demonstrated. To change the words of a poem in *Rejected Addresses*, here was a case of "and while Mamma said 'Pooh! he may;' Papa said 'No! he shan't.'" We need not accept either mercenary and unprincipled motives on the father's side, or undue tendency towards evil in the character of George. Restraint of an exceedingly irksome kind for such a lover of nature, frequent reproof, curtailment of even legitimate pleasure, constant toil at copying when he yearned to express himself, these and the mother's reprehensible favouritism worked the mischief. As one writer says: 'I do maintain that his better nature—for he could be both humane and generous—was crusted over, and that the rolling of that crust was largely done during his early training.'

One's heart is heavy for this child. The father and mother were both artists of no mean order (Mrs. Morland exhibited at the

Royal Academy in 1785 two pictures—*A Girl with a Guinea Pig*, and *A Girl Washing*). So that "from his cradle the child crawled among canvases and maul-sticks," and was wont to see his parents hard at work before the easel. In this strange, and in all likelihood, disorderly, Bohemian household, visited by Flaxman, Joshua Reynolds, Romney, and other great artists of the day, one sees George Morland set to toil from early morning till nightfall. The two sisters, high-spirited, and more favoured, are free to roam the house at their pleasure; but young George sits alone. When the family and their guests are enjoying life downstairs, this child lays down his brushes, picks up his violin, and fills the room with throbbing melody. Dawe, who was Morland's friend in those days (he was a pupil of Henry Morland) speaks of these things and describes one of their Sunday walks to a sandpit at Blackheath. He was amazed at the marvellous manner in which George Morland, many weeks later, was able to reproduce from memory this scene which they had beheld together.

One is not surprised to find George Romney interested in this strange solitary boy. He, remembering his own life, perhaps understood him far better than the parents did. His offer to take George Morland into his own house and pay him a salary of £300 a

year, on condition of his signing articles for three years, is eloquent of his penetration into the boy's character and ability. Gress, the Drawing Master to the Royal Family, made a similar offer. In justice to him let us remember that if he had accepted such offers we might never have known George Morland, the painter of Nature and Nature's children. Both offers were rejected by the already wayward youth.

There are those who say that George Morland attended the Academy Schools; there are others who say that he did not. It is related that his mother withdrew him from attendance, because he had fallen among evil companions, and had acquired a taste for strong liquor. He was now at the age of eighteen, at the very crossways of life. If we put away all attempts at moral disquisition, there is seen in George Morland at this age, and, indeed, onward through the rest of his all too short life, much to admire and much to love. There is always such a painful tendency among good preachers, good moralists, and good folk generally, to select a person's bad points with all the gusto of little Jack Horner picking out the plum from his pie. Here was a youth who was jovial and generous, perfectly free from pharisaism, the friend of publicans and sinners, but also of animals and little children; a hater of snobs and snobbishness,

almost to a foolish degree—an English Robert Burns in many respects ; and what has his country done for him ? It has admired his art, profited from the sale of his pictures and their engravings, wallowed, sighing with grief and pain, in accounts (largely false) of his wicked character, and then handed him down to the generation following as an example of an utterly unpardonable sinner.

There are two pictures of Morland which we can consult for the purpose of regulating our estimate of his appearance and character. The one, a drawing, hangs appropriately in the National Portrait Gallery, just over the portrait of Stubbs, by Ozias Humphrey. It shows a man of about thirty years of age, one would suppose, perhaps rather less. The brow is broad and suggests the possession of high intelligence. The eyes, which are somewhat dreamy, are well defined, but convey the impression of a man who, behind this far-away expression, is keenly observant, and more than slightly quizzical. The nose is long and well shaped, while the mouth is small, too small, and, although it is firm, with closed lips, these lips are inclined towards fullness, yet not to the degree of suggesting sensuality. The face is broad, and viewed collectively, possesses the roundness and fullness of the John Bull type, but the nearness of laughter, clearly conveyed,

under the features, relieves it from any hint of heaviness. The chin would be very square in a face of a narrower type ; but at first glance one is inclined to think of it as pointed—an impression removed by closer observation. Intellect, humour, penetration, and kindliness are written clearly in this portrait, and one searches in vain for hints of such a character as is revealed by the accounts of Morland's life.

The other portrait, a painting by himself, shows us a boy of about fourteen years of age, and is valuable for that reason. The hardships and temptations of life have not as yet moulded the plastic character. The hair, of a rich brown hue, is long, wavy, and soft to the eyes. The boy has a fresh-coloured, chubby face. Again one sees eyes that suggest dreaminess, but also the peculiar alertness common to boyhood of a healthy and robust type. There is the long straight nose, now in direct profile, whereas before one has seen it in a three-quarter face. The mouth is small and red, with compressed lips above a chin which clearly in this picture is full and strong. A close reading of the eyes establishes the impression of detachment combined with close observation. It is the face of a child in the process of forming character, and one leaves that innocent physiognomy with the thought of the responsibility of parenthood, and the need

of that sympathetic insight on the part of elders and guardians which is so essential for the upbringing and development of the child. Clearly a great responsibility rested upon the father and mother of this child, for the portrait eloquently speaks of fertile soil, and considerable possibility for good and enduring character. Another picture, the well known water-colour drawing by Thomas Rowlandson (to be seen in the British Museum) offers us a view of a jolly, attractive young fellow of about twenty years of age. He is tall and straight, and is standing in front of a fireplace, and, with legs apart and arms behind his back, looks out at you with a cheeky, good-humoured, winsome look on his remarkably handsome face. Here is not simply comely intelligence, but also that which one could love and admire. This picture comes between the other two just described, and serves as an independent witness of what they would convey to the onlooker ; it offers a view, too, of a somewhat roistering, devil-may-care sort of disposition that accords with some of the anecdotes of this period of his life. Later on, the man Morland is said to have been unattractive in personality ; but one feels that this was in large measure due to the evil that had penetrated to the core of his existence. He who had been so particular as to his dress, in later life had become careless and slovenly.

' He wore a coat of a mixed colour, with long and square skirts and breeches of velveteen ; these, with two or three waistcoats, and a dirty silk handkerchief round his neck, completed his appearance, which was that of a coachman. In other parts of his dress he was equally mean and slovenly, seldom taking the trouble to undress.'*

By the age of twenty-one, when his apprenticeship with his father was at an end, his character had been largely determined, and people say that, mentally, he was a dwarf. However, he knew his own mind sufficiently to break with his father, and start life for himself—that life which offers such a view of hard work, hard drinking, and hard living that it seems an epitome of the 18th century itself. But any critical and reflective reader of one of the fuller biographies is baffled in his attempt to reconcile the several sides of George Morland's brief existence.

At this time he clinched two habits—that of deep drinking by his attendance at the famous Cheshire Cheese, and that of bargaining rashly with picture dealers. His eccentricities are foreshadowed by his escapade in setting off one night for Gravesend, where, picking up two sailors and a carpenter, he journeyed with them to

* Quoted in *The Connoisseur*, Vol. IX.

Chatham, somewhat fearful of their rough behaviour. After a drinking bout in a low tavern, he accompanied them on 'a voyage' in a small sailing vessel, as far as the North Foreland, and, three days later, arrived at the Cheshire Cheese full of sea terms, sea-language, and possessed of a fund of laughable stories. Abounding with life and animal spirits, free for the first time of his existence, his period of shyness and reserve over and done with, he revelled in the extravagance rendered possible by his visits to taverns and places where young hot-heads like himself rejoiced to assemble.

Somewhat more than the ordinary vanity of youth was upon him in these days. He dressed extravagantly, being especially fond of boots, for which, it is said, he never paid less than two guineas the pair. In the company he loved best of all, 'ostlers, pot-boys, horse-jockeys, moneylenders, pawn-brokers, punks and pugilists,' this youth, dressed in a green coat adorned with large yellow buttons, leather breeches and top-boots, in the then extreme of foppish puppyhood, 'swanked,' as we should say nowadays, to his full content. He seems to have made money easily right from the outset, and he spent it just as easily, living lavishly and dressing as a dandy.

It was in this mental condition that he fell under the influence of Mrs. Hill, a friend

of gallants, fashionable men of the town. This good-looking youth, with his glow, sparkling eyes, love of dress, high spirits, and marked ability, captured her sympathetic notice. She asked him to spend the season at Margate, promising to introduce him to people of fashion and patrons of art. He accepted her invitation, and, to make a long story short, he gave his desire for pleasure and work full indulgence. His frankness, joviality, and love of sport took him everywhere. As one writer says, 'his life at this time reads like a page out of Roderick Random.*' Horse-racing, cock-fighting, boxing, jockeying, seem to have been his heart's desires. One has neither the inclination nor the room to repeat the numerous stories of those days: these two accounts, in his own words, may stand as types. He is riding as a jockey. 'Then the drums beat and he started; it was a four mile heat and the first three miles I could not keep the horse behind them, being so spirited an animal; by that means he exhausted himself, and I soon had the mortification to see them come galloping past me, hissing and laughing while I was spurring his guts out.' On another occasion he reached the winning post half a mile ahead of all his rivals, for, like Jehu, he had

* J. T. H. Bailey : *A Biographical Essay*.

driven furiously. He was set upon by a crowd of sailors, smugglers and other men who were bitter because they had lost. 'Finally a party of my horsemen, and several gentlemen and their servants, some postboys, hairdressers, bakers and other people I knew, armed themselves with sticks, ran to my assistance and brought me a horse, though the mob pressed it so hard it was long before I could mount.' The marvel is that he ever did any work, but we are told that at Margate he painted 'a vast number of pictures.'*

Mrs. Hill now carried him off to France. Whatever the attachment may have been, this wayward youth did not respond to her affection as she would have desired. Perhaps she thought that amid French life he would seek more of her companionship; or, perhaps, she desired to wean him from the 'postboys, hairdressers, bakers and other people.' They went to St. Omer and Calais where they were warmly received by French and English Society of a high type. Mrs. Hill had promised Morland work, and now commissions for portraits were showered upon him. His letters of this period disclose his boyish attitude towards life and its experience. He comments upon the size and loftiness of the bed placed at his disposal, 'So very high I had to jump into it;'

* F. W. Blagden.

he notices the dirtiness of French friars, 'who never change their clothes till they drop off their backs.' At Church he seems to hear in the music the English tune of 'Nancy Dawson.' French women go out in all weathers without hats. He is pleased at the lowness of prices. 'I bought a fine satin coat yesterday for a quarter of what it would have cost in England; leather breeches are only half a guinea a pair; shoes three shillings, cotton stockings half a crown, worsted stockings very dear and very hard.'

Morland, with his knowledge of art, must have realised the wealth that now lay close at hand. A short journey over the wide hills of Picardy (and what thousands of sights and impressions he would have received as he passed through the villages and among the sunny tracts of those broad expanses!), and Paris with all its treasures would be open to his view. But it was not to be. This man, whose pictures were afterwards so much admired by the French, only stayed a few weeks in France. Mrs. Hill returned to Margate; and so did he. Morland, seemingly without a sigh, recrossed the Channel. But so strange is life that he never, perhaps, comprehended the importance of his action. It was the sight of a pretty face, perhaps the curl of a lock of hair that, to use a Shandean phrase, 'did

his business.' A petticoat for him meant more than prudence, and he was now flirting with Mrs. Hill's maid Jenny. 'One of the sweetest creatures ever seen by man,' says he. 'She is upwards of six feet in height and so extremely handsome that I have fell desperately in love, and what is charming, I find it returned; she has not been long come from Liverpool and is but seventeen years of age.' Those who possess a more mature knowledge of 'the sex,' are not astonished to learn that Jenny very soon left Mrs. Hill's service, and took up her residence on her own account in London.

The affair with Jenny came to naught. Mrs. Hill, always a 'shadowy figure' passes out of Morland's life. He told his friends that 'he was tired of old maids.' Youth at that age is ever unsympathetic and ungrateful. One catches sight soon after this of another affair with another young maid-servant, and then, for weal or woe, going to reside with William Ward, Morland found in Anne Ward, the engraver's sister, the woman who was destined to be his wife. He married Anne Ward, and William Ward married Maria Morland. The two weddings took place within a month, and the two couples set up house-keeping together in High Street, Marylebone. James Ward says his family believed that the eccentricities of George Morland were the wildness of genius

and that marrying would settle him. 'I asked him if he could ever be happy without painting. He answered, "No! never." '*

It is not difficult to imagine the risks of this 'idyllic' arrangement. We gladly refer the reader to earlier biographies for details with regard to domestic storms, the story of the abortive duel between the two young husbands in 'a sand pit behind the house,' abortive because they were better artists than marksmen (the pistols were loaded with slug shot). 'Jealousy between the wives; fretful suspicion between the husbands.'† It is all graphic; very realistic; almost like life itself. James Ward says: 'There were no quarrels in the joint-house business. William found that the life and connection were not congenial to his industrious habits.' What is one to believe? Almost what one wishes to believe. Yet it is well to reflect that there is no story from Morland's own side. Quite naturally the Ward family, without wishing to damage Morland's reputation, were willing to present their own case in the best light possible. However, when we recall Morland's nature, his lack of sympathetic training, his artistic temperament, and what we can conjecture as to his later habits and customs, it is very easy to realise that people who were free to

* *The Portfolio*, 1886.

† J. T. H. Bailey.

leave him might well prefer to live in another house. Yet it is likely that for him matrimony was a factor in his ruin. Probably this young artist, sooner than is usual, began to regret the loss of liberty, while the young wife quickly learned her husband's true character. It is quite likely that Morland found that the woman of his choice was not as ideal as he had imagined. His love for music came back to him at this time and he bought a violin, a 'cello, and a piano, in the hope that his wife would learn the last-named instrument as she had a sweet voice and a correct ear. But application was wanting ; ' no further progress was made in the Science of Music than to convince poor George that the vanity of dress in most females of a certain age is paramount to even the charms of music.'*

At South Kensington there is a pencil sketch which shows us what sort of face and figure Morland saw when he looked at his wife. He presents to us a plump young woman whose somewhat full face is saved from the charge of being expressionless by her rather wide-apart and somewhat pleading and penetrative eyes. Even so, it is not a face that promises much intellectuality or character. One thinks of Amelia Sedley as one looks at it. The drawing offers a

* Collins, pp. 56 & 57.

beautiful study of Morland's careful work and illustrates to perfection the dress of the period.

For a time marriage seems to have inspired and settled George Morland. As we shall notice later on, it is easy to distinguish in his work a class of pictures which date from the July of 1786. For example, *The Fortune Teller* was painted in 1788 and may be regarded as a type of these works, although others are described elsewhere in this book. For these productions his wife and his sister sat as models and William Ward engraved the resulting picture. In the *Letitia* series as well as in the other pictures of this period we see the characteristics of the same woman, soft brown eyes, rounded chin, delicately moulded features, and slim girlish form. Love idealises, and while love lingered Morland was allured to paint these pictures which stand apart from those which we regard generally as typical of his brush. Undoubtedly Mrs. Morland suffered deeply by reason of her husband's character and disposition, his wildness, recklessness, dissolute and evil habits, debts and dram-drinking. Let us recollect her continued devotion to him, and his, as far as it could go, for her. When he died, she, according to her prophecy, died three days after. For Morland's sake let us also make this allowance. In cases of matrimonial trouble the sympathy

of the world generally flows out unreservedly towards the wife. That seems to be a natural tendency. One writer, drawing upon imagination, says, 'Many a night her pillow must have been wet with weeping when George was away from home on one of his mad escapades, or lying by her side sleeping off a heavy drinking bout.' But again, we assert, '*We do not know the man's story.*' Was there no fault on the wife's side? Is woman always entirely in the right and above censure? One feels that the right help-mate would have ministered to his needs and with understanding and sympathetic tact have encouraged him to tread the paths of virtue. The very fact of his speedy falling away argues against the existence of these desirable qualities in Mrs. Morland. We will make every admission of his wrong-doing, but in fairness we must ask the question: "If we knew all, should we blame as unreservedly as we do?" One does not willingly admit that Morland was, at first, altogether in the wrong, for it is easy to read in all his biographies that he had many good points which, with sympathy and tact, might have been developed. He was easily touched in some respects. Blagden says his nature resembled that of Oliver Goldsmith. As long as he had a shilling in his pocket he would give it to any distressed object.

Ward left the house ; but he did not leave off engraving Morland's pictures. His connection continued along interested lines. He was one of those who did not for a moment hesitate to draw material advantage from the poor dissolute human being who possessed such wonderful artistic powers.

After the two households had separated, the Morlands lived first in Great Portland Street, then in Pleasing Passage, Camden Town, at the back of the 'Mother Black Cap.' Mrs. Morland was confined and bore her husband a stillborn child, and in this we may, perhaps, see the commencement of their estrangement.* They had no more children and Morland shifts about from place to place, sometimes in her company, sometimes alone ; so erratic is his life, henceforth, that it is almost impossible to piece it together.

* *The Farington Diary* (Vol. I., p. 215) under the date October 17, 1797. 'Morland has a venereal taint in his blood—which has certainly impaired his mind. He is very restless in disposition and often changes his residence—moving from place to place, frequently after objects which he desires to paint—is 33 or 4 years old. Ward has studied Paul Potter's works—thinks of becoming a student of Academy—says Morland is deficient in sound drawing.' Collins says that 'Morland seems to have taken to drinking after the birth of a still-born child, the long illness of his wife, and the knowledge that she would not bear any more children.'

Before we make that attempt, for the sake of associating him with locality and locality with him, it will be well to comment upon his manner of life with regard to his art. He was nothing if not realistic, and his realism was the outcome of his methods. Anybody and everybody, and, one might add, everything, came to the room where he was working. It is said that at Camden Town he let the children of the neighbourhood come and play around his easel as he worked. Children always loved him. 'Donkeys, pigs, poultry, jackdaws in wicker cages, guinea-pigs, rabbits, kept him company as he painted—he always had models. If he wanted some feature, say, a red cloak, he stationed someone at his window to watch for a passer-by who met his need, and invited the wayfarer in.'* He always rewarded such a model handsomely. An account like this makes one sympathise sincerely with the painter's wife.

It was in the neighbourhoods of Camden Town and Kentish Town that Morland yielded to the attractions of local inns, for here he met the characters he loved—hostlers, waggoners, yokels, horse-dealers—the men who figure in his pictures. The *Deserter* Series was painted from the figures of a sergeant and drummer and a private soldier

* J. T. H. Bailey.

who were going to arrest a deserter, and were induced by Morland to spend the night drinking while he entertained them and sketched them. He had very definite views as to the society he preferred. His jovial nature and open hand and heart unfitted him for the rank to which he actually belonged. Not only did his desire for models impel him to seek the society of the men of the road ; his preference for them drew him to them also. ' We see him wayward, wilful, volatile, being coerced and fooled at the beginning of what might have been a life of promise ; being driven, not led ; and then breaking out an easy capture of the vicious, a willing capture of the profligate and worthless. That the truest part of the man was neither is shown by his works. A wholly dissolute vagabond could no more have painted *Letitia* than could Hood, if he had been vile, have written the *Bridge of Sighs*.*' When he was urged to make a claim for the dormant title of Sir Samuel Morland, and Mr. Wedd, his solicitor, reported that he had an undoubted right, but that there was no endowment attached to the honour, and, on the contrary, he himself would have to support his rank, Morland is reported to have said : " Well, Bobby, never mind, there's more honour in being a fine painter than a

* Louis Cecil. *The Printseller*, p. 78.

fine lord, and as for tacking 'Sir' to my name, I'll be damned if I stand a glass of gin for it—plain George Morland will always sell my pictures, and secure them as much respect all over the world." It is also told that, when a noble lord asked to see his work, Morland not only refused to see him, but jeered at him from the window as he walked away. No doubt those who could not appreciate his reasons for association with what are called 'vulgar and low' characters, must have considered him mad, or hopelessly depraved. But there is the other side to the question. Charles Lamb once told a friend that he was always terribly nervous when out to dinner in Society; the very presence of the servants upset him. Morland disliked any company where he thought, or imagined, he was despised. One is inclined to believe that such feelings are more prevalent than people would suppose; and, in earlier generations, when conventions were more highly esteemed than nowadays, it is easy to see that a genius who found himself amid the affectations and fancies of a higher class than that in which he moved, would experience all the agonies of a Kipps at the Royal Grand Hotel. Later on, when there was a scheme to pay off Morland's debts, and provide him with a house in Charlotte Square, "I had rather go to Newgate, by —", said he; and to Newgate he was transferred

and there painted, in the midst of more congenial society, some of his best pictures.

Allan Cunningham, however, tells an anecdote that suggests method in Morland's madness. He says that while Morland was in the Isle of Wight, a friend discovered him in a low inn called 'The Cabin,' amidst a crowd of smugglers, boatmen and common characters. He asked the artist why he kept such company. "Reasons," answered Morland, "and good ones. See! Where could I find such a picture of life as that" (showing his book of sketches) "unless among the originals of the cave?" Morland, as we are quite aware, found his models in that very class of society. At the time he lived, the several grades of our English life were far more sharply defined than now. An artist of to-day, whether he is a novelist or a painter, can move about among the crews of trawlers, mingle with railwaymen, or hobnob with dustmen, and everybody understands the connection. He and his models may be quite good friends; but in the pages of Morland's first biographers, one traces a sort of anger that an English gentleman should demean himself by association with such common vulgar people. To-day we are more able to understand Morland than were his own contemporaries.

Morland moved from place to place. From Pleasing Passage he went to Warren's

Lane. At 'The Britannia,' an inn near his home, he would take the chair after a hard day's work, and dressed in an old coat, leather breeches and riding boots, shout out the choruses with boon companions of all grades. He was the Comus of the rout. For a time, strangely enough, he became a 'head-borough,' and, in that capacity, represented authority. Apparently messages from the High Constable did not always receive from him the due respect and prompt attention the law demands, and he did not retain his office for long. Irwin and Brooks, two young fellows of his acquaintance, the former a man of gentlemanly manners, the latter a shoemaker by trade, shared his life in those days. Irwin acted as his agent for the sale of his pictures; Brooks was his servant. These two men drank with him, laughed when he laughed, cooked his meals, cleaned his boots, or followed him to prison after the manner of Strap with Roderick Random.

At this point it is well to notice carefully just what led to Morland's financial troubles. When he broke away from his father, he was employed by a crafty dealer, an Irishman, who bled him. Morland is said to have painted pictures for this man, who charged the public an entrance fee of half a crown to view the exhibits. In return, he gave Morland the merest pittance, and

kept him in drudgery. It was while he was in these circumstances that Mrs. Hill found him, and carried him away into the Elysium of his youth.

We may take it that Morland was a marked example of the man of genius who is incapable of being a business man at the same time. He appears to have been perfectly reckless in the matter of money, never troubling to ascertain whether he received value for value. Such a man, unless he is guarded by friends, or by an honest agent, is the easy prey of rogues. The question arises why did not his wife's people, or his own family, insist upon control? The answer probably is found in Morland's own dissolute habits, and utterly wayward character. We find him gradually becoming surrounded by a host of rogues, of art-dealers, dishonest tradespeople, and spongers of every class. His extravagance and culpable generosity caused his money to flow out like water. Then some tradesman would demand payment. "Oh! take that picture" (one can imagine the exasperated artist crying out some such and other words) "and get out of my sight with your inconvenient presence and pestering ways. Sell it and get your money." That was exactly what such a rascal desired. From his entry into artistic life Morland was an extraordinary success. His pictures always sold, and sold

well. The tradesmen got rid of the work at a good price and pocketed the balance. If things became too pressing, Brooks would smuggle out the little stock of furniture to another lodging in a new neighbourhood, and they would start over again. To anybody with an orderly mind and a horror of financial disaster, such a system is incomprehensible. This was the position of George Morland, and it is easy to see how this manner of life combined with his habits of drinking and recklessness, would rapidly drag him to the debtors' prison. The modern reader feels furious as he reads of this splendid genius dragged hither and thither by rogues. Yet such was the system of our law that it supported these scoundrels and doomed their helpless victim.

At this juncture Wedd, his solicitor, took up his affairs, and obtained lodgings for him 'within the rules,' that is in the vicinity of the Court. The debts amounted to £200. He paid off this sum, and moved to Leicester Square, where he painted for Colonel Stuart that picture of the *Gypsies kindling a fire*, an epoch in his life, for this was a new and powerful style which he was offering to the world. Between 1789 and 1790 he changed his abode time after time, choosing (and how strange it sounds to modern ears!) the country around Paddington. It was the

stable of the White Lion Inn that he depicted in his famous *The Inside of a Stable*. At Paddington, Wilsden (as it was spelt), Hampstead, and other quiet country spots, he found in the lanes and fields his drovers, farm labourers, gypsies, and animals—figures and objects so closely associated with the new display of his genius. Hassell tells us that once, after the fatigue of a day's work, he himself went for a ramble. Morland overtook him near Wilsden, and, together, they crossed the common fields of that little village, and reached a solitary inn at Stonebridge on the road to Harrow. On entering the kitchen, Morland caught sight of a figure that held his attention; before breakfast the next day the sketch was completed, and thus we have his *Ale House Kitchen*. Hassell adds that some of their outings were the pleasantest hours that he himself ever spent, and that Morland was often at his easel by five o'clock in the morning.

If this man had possessed thrift and business capability, he might have lived and died a wealthy man. He painted rapidly, and, to give the lie to many of the stories told about him, he was extremely industrious. A man who could give the world 4,000 pictures, that is an average of two hundred a year for twenty years, could not have been perpetually drunk. Even during the last sad years, he worked hard. Dawe says,

‘ By his brother’s books it appears that for him alone he painted 492 pictures during the last eight years of his life and probably he painted three hundred more for other people. At the same time he made upwards of a thousand drawings.’ Such a statement ought to contradict malicious rumour ; but it is proverbial that rumour dies hard. What we must notice here is that at one time he was actually making £100 a week. ‘ The tradesmen at Paddington became so many art dealers.’ One thinks of Morland in his house at Winchester Row, Paddington, opposite the White Lion Inn, surrounded with his cronies and enemies—loafers, prize-fighters, jockeys, horsey men and doggy men, farmers, labourers, tramps, coach-drivers, hostlers, tradesmen coming with ‘ a purse in one hand and a bottle in the other,’ characters of all sorts, on a kind of Tom Tiddler’s ground,—working at his canvases, actually catching the faces and figures of this set of parasites that were eating out his very life, and creating out of woe itself pictures that posterity would covet as treasures of great worth. Dawe says that when the debts amounted to over £4,000 Morland fled from Paddington. Wedd and William Ward tried to save him from a debtor’s fate. The creditors met together. They did not wish to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. They agreed to payment by instalments.



Nottingham

MORLAND IN HIS STUDIO

GEORGE MORLAND

City Art Museum

Morland promised temperance, economy, and £120 a month. But not only had he earned distrust; he had sown evil seed and was now reaping the harvest. Formerly a sprightly, generous youth, his reckless prodigality and intemperate ways were avenging themselves upon him. Can we accept the following statement (from his hand) as the truth?

'G. Morland's Bub for one day at Paddington
(Having nothing to do)

Before Breakfast : Holland's Gin, Rum and milk.

Breakfast : Coffee.

Before Dinner : Hollands, Porter, Shrub, Ale, Hollands and Water, Port wine with ginger, Bottled Porter.

At Dinner and after : Port wine, Porter, Bottled ditto, Punch, Porter, Ale, Opium and Water.

Port wine at Supper, Gin and Water. Shrub. Rum on going to bed.'

Under this comes the sketch of a tombstone with death's head and crossbones, an epitaph, "Here lies a drunken dog."* Even amid the notorious hard-drinking of the 18th century, such a day's record seems incredible. It is impossible to reconcile much of that sort of thing with his marvellous

* See Bailey's *Biographical Essay*.

output of work. But his money went in other ways. One cannot keep eight saddle horses for a song. Even the crowds of small, dashed off pictures which he painted could not keep his balance level. So he flits again—to Lambeth, East Sheen, Queen Anne Street in the Minories, Newington, Kennington Green, and Hackney.

And now the boon companions begin to melt away, while the Israelites creep closer. For years this English genius lives like a hunted animal who is forced for safety to find out unwonted holes and corners. At Kennington Green a religious cobbler quoted texts in return for blasphemy, and drove Morland frantic. At Hackney where he was living with his wife, the fact of his going out at nightfall, carrying mysterious packets under his arm, led the zealous neighbours to give information to the Bank of England that they had in their midst a forger of bank-notes. Morland's escape from his back door as the Bow Street officers entered his house is told in all full accounts of his life. The Bank authorities, realising their mistake, apologised and made Morland a handsome gift of money. One never expects a neighbour to apologise.

For Morland's sake the reader welcomes the respite he experienced when, at intervals, he escaped from London and its growing army of dealers to live in peace in the

country. Morland had a real terror of prison, and these irate butchers, horse-dealers, grocers, and wine-merchants robbed him of all opportunity for serious work. Accompanied by Brooks, or Hassell, or Burn, he found a sweeter life elsewhere. One reads of blank despair, the contemplation of suicide; then again of his entering cottages and playing with the children—‘a child himself at the bottom of his heart.’* If he himself could have been the father of children, he might have been a different man. But one doubts whether anything could have checked his headlong career to ruin. It is worth while noticing that Morland is said to have discovered that the environs of London were not marked by ‘a picturesque character sufficiently strong and diversified,’ by his visit to Enderby in Leicestershire, to which place he was invited by Claud Lorrain Smith.

So the life goes on, amid painful domestic scenes. Waste, drink, and misery. How the man could work such long hours at a time in such circumstances one cannot conceive. His sojourns in the Isle of Wight helped temporarily to restore health. But even there fate drove him hard and unkindly. He stayed at Cowes, Yarmouth, Freshwater, Bonchurch, Chale, and painted at all those

* J. T. H. Bailey.

places. At Yarmouth he was arrested for sketching the Castle and carried off as a spy. Dr. Lynne of Westminster owned Surrey House, Carvell Lane, Cowes, and he was a good friend to Morland when he lent him his place as a shelter and retreat. But at last a report that the bailiffs had found out his retreat and were on their way to arrest him drove him back to London, where he now lodged in Vauxhall.

Morland was arrested for debt in November, 1799. He was allowed to take lodgings 'within the rules,' and this life dragged him down and down. It is said that he was drunk for days at a time. Yet, as we have said, his industry must to some extent refute that statement. By these days Morland had grown corpulent, and had lost vigour. Collins paints a picture of him in Dean Street in July, 1804, which is painful to contemplate. 'He looked besotted, squalid, cadaverous, with hanging cheeks, pinched nose, contracted nostrils, blurred and blood-shot eyes, bloated frame, swelled legs, palsied hand, tremulous voice—a dismal ruin of what was once one of the soundest frames containing the highest genius.' Lovers of true nature deplored in that wreck the degradation of a painter whose works have done honour to the British nation.

The brief play was over and the curtain was to descend upon this man's brief tragedy

of life. Under the privilege of the rules he lived in lodgings in Lambeth Road, where Mrs. Morland joined him. James Ward says of his sister, 'It was astonishing that his wife with delicate mind and frame could have an affection for such a man, yet she had used to say, "Ah! my friends think it would be a great relief to me if George were to die; but they do not know what they say; for whenever that takes place I shall not live three days."' '

And so it came to pass. In 1802 he regained his freedom under the Insolvent Debtors' Act. He was seized by a worse enemy, however, paralysis, which robbed him of the use of his left hand, so that he could not hold his palette. Yet still he persevered until, arrested again for a publican's score of £10, he died on 27th October, 1804, in a sponging house in Eyre Street, Cold Bath Fields. His wife died on the 30th October and was buried with him in the burial ground of St. James's Chapel, Hampstead Road.

It is manifestly impossible to whitewash such a life as that of George Morland. Yet while we remember the tragedy of it all, and the melancholia, delirium, palsy, and fear, that made him dread the dark and would not let him sleep, causing him to tremble violently at any accidental noise; when we recall the absence of control that

left him lying unconscious in the snow, the actual exemplification of the saying that as a man sows so shall he reap, let us also remember the good that is in the worst of us. Children and animals loved him. He was generous to a degree. When separated from his wife, most conscientiously he provided her with the money he had promised her. Her devotion to him speaks at least for something in his nature that could be loved. His art stands for what is typically English, pure, and clean, and strong. His faults were open, and fell chiefly upon himself. He was far from that meanness, rancour and narrowness which are often present in persons of cold and lofty morality. Morland took no care to hide his faults, but rather delighted in dragging them out into the open light of day. Therefore, while many men remain whited sepulchres he shows to disadvantage. In some instances, it may be, punishment is put off for a future existence; Morland, undoubtedly, was punished in this life, and who would care to criticise where God has already judged? Perhaps the most startling thing in the Day of Judgment will be the absence of Judgment.

CHAPTER II.

STYLE, DEVELOPMENT, CHARACTERISTICS.

IN that subtle and indefinable thing called style, there enters by an unseen door, to dominate all else, the element of soul. By that element we recognise the man.

This is true of all great artists, and therefore it is true of George Morland. Whatever he may have been outwardly, his pictures speak to us apart from the facts of his biography. Morland's work, whatever its quality may be, is distinctly characteristic. There is something, too, which bids the onlooker think that here at least is a true product of the eighteenth century life and society. One looks in vain for the grace of a Romney, the understanding of a Reynolds, or the interpretation of a Gainsborough. Morland offers something essentially different—he is entirely and always himself. As we look at his pictures, over our senses steal the odour of the stable, the flavour of the tap room; we feel the ruggedness of some sturdy countryman of a hundred years ago; or we hear the rumble of the coach, the grunt of the wallowing

pig, 'the cock's shrill clarion and the echoing horn.' That is what one notices at first; and, if we were to leave off at that point, and did not carry our criticism further, our observation, slight as it might be, would be perfectly accurate.

But Morland was not an ordinary artist, and in spite of obvious blemishes his work is great, demanding close enquiry for its complete understanding. W. E. Henley said: 'In all the range of British Art there are few things better than a good Morland. Morland was nothing if not a painter, and Morland's paintings are nothing if not arrangements of paint. He was a vigorous and expressive draughtsman; he has the craftsman's sense of his material, and the craftsman's delight in the uses of it for its own sake; he was a colourist, and a colourist of a good type, and the fact remains, and must remain, that his pictures are painter's work.' Morland was not one-sided, and it is necessary to take a wide view of his art in order to understand it. It is a characteristic of some artists, as well as a limitation, that when we have seen one specimen of their work, we have seen practically all. Morland varies as much as our English climate. His robustness does not incline to the grace of Spring or the tenderness of Autumn. He is not in harmony with the countryside in its gentler moods. It is

strength rather than gentleness that awakens response in his heart ; free abounding life, rather than the timid or tired glances of the changing year.

There is little to say about Morland's training and early development. His father found out the boy's great talents at an early age, which is not wonderful, considering that he himself was an artist and the son of an artist of no mean fame. Naturally the parents would watch for traces of artistic ability in their children. Strict discipline seems to have been the lot of the child chosen by heredity to carry on the family talent. Every hour not spent at the easel was for him deemed wasted. He appears to have had no child companions, apart from brothers and sisters. Later on he was rigidly kept in at night-time. It is stated that he attended lectures given by Sir Joshua Reynolds, or else he read them ; but for some reason or other, he was withdrawn from the academy schools. Great artists visited the house of the Morlands. People have asserted that George Morland owed everything to his father and that his splendid scheme of composition, his distinctive colouring and the detail and chiaroscuro of his art are just the results of early training. But Morland cannot be said to have been initiated in any special style of painting. His father desired that he should be a thorough draughtsman.

Hassell assures us that it is certain that the youth imbibed freely from the genius of Reynolds, either by a study of the pictures of the great master or from reading his expositions of art.

This may be so ; but we are on surer ground when we say that in his early days Morland made copies of certain works, and we may assume that in these tasks his young and impressionable mind not only received many a lesson in form and colour, but also became more selective in taste, and critical in judgment. Collins tells us that at the age of four the child drew, after a rapid glance, an extraordinarily good picture of a coach and four fine horses that had passed the house, and that the best connoisseurs of the day praised the work.

For a time his father allowed him liberty to draw whatever he pleased, and evidently he progressed rapidly, for he was admitted to Somerset House Royal Academy at an early age. This biographer goes on to say that Mr. Morland senior obtained for the budding artist some of the finest productions of the Dutch and Flemish Schools as well as the best drawings of the celebrated masters of Italy. ' But, although it is well known to many artists and judges of pictures that he could always draw, when sober, the human or any other figure with the utmost accuracy, yet he neglected the Roman School from

whence he was undoubtedly beholden for that knowledge. The colouring of Hobbema, the spirit and freedom of Ruysdael, and the neatness of pencil peculiar to Paul Potter, Cuyp, Karel du Jardin, and Adrian Vanderfelde seem at times to have engrossed his attention, and they certainly were, as he always declared them to be, his favourites.* On the other hand, a modern critic pointing out the close kinship between Morland's art and that of such painters as Teniers, Brouwer, Cuyp and the Ostades remarks that 'we do not learn that Morland ever studied their works. He went once with William Ward to visit some Dutch pictures belonging to the Marquis of Bute at Luton Hoo, but he refused to go on looking for fear he should become an imitator.'† Hassell narrates a similar sort of tale. He remembers that he mentioned once to Morland a picture that M. de Louthembourg, the painter and quack doctor of Strasbourg, had exhibited. Morland remarked, "So much do I admire his productions that if I were to investigate his works, I should leave my own style for one I deem superior."‡ This same writer says elsewhere that Morland

* Collins, pp. 7-9.

† G. C. Williamson, Chapter IX.

‡ He referred to Louthembourg's work as 'tea-board painting,' an industry then fashionable. He himself tried his hand at this kind of work.

had at an early period copied the style of Mr. Wheatley, an artist who claimed for himself that if his fire did not equal de Louthembourg's, his pencil never stepped beyond the boundaries of nature. Wheatley had obtained his types of peasant life from Ireland, and was a friend and contemporary of the great Mortimer. Morland had studied Wheatley and now often sought after gypsies in the lanes near Willesden, Hendon and Hampstead and sketched them. The point to notice is that he admired Hobbema, Ruysdael, Poussin, Jan Wynants, the Van Ostades, Karel du Jardin, and, therefore, was probably influenced by them. Similarly he fell under the spell of Gainsborough, Richard Wilson and F. Wheatley. Yet there was a definite limit to all such influence. Morland was always idiosyncratic, and as Cunningham says, he expressed by his craftsmanship his sentiments and feelings and thus opened his heart to the multitude.

The fact is that the discussion as to the origin of Morland's style has never cleared up the difficulties surrounding it. Some compare him to Gainsborough (as for example in Gainsborough's *Watering Place*); others point out resemblances to both Adrian and Isaac Van Ostade; or, again, some think that the works of Frans Van Mieris of Delft (as in *The Tinker*), are the prototype of the English artist. To examine Cuyp's picture

Landscape with Cattle, at the National Gallery, is most certainly a suggestive exercise for a student of Morland. The cattle, the horse and the men recall in their attitudes Morland's expression. The landscape is different, naturally, because it is a Dutch landscape with all the smoothness and flatness of that country with its absence of English hedgerow and tree ; but the man on horseback and the horse might well be Morland's own work. Again, A. Van Ostade's *The Alchymist* has in it not only the very quietness of colour and distinction of harmony of the English artist's work, but this interior with the alchymist and his comical face as he puffs with the bellows at the fire, offers a certain indefinable quality, a spirit rather than an expression, which again suggests George Morland. But, when all is said, many more such comparisons might be drawn in other directions, and it just comes to this, that his style was his own, being the outcome of individual taste and adoption. Whatever he gleaned from one source or another was transmuted into the work of George Morland. The style is the man, and he as a man was essentially irregular and original, averse from being bound down by the traditions of any school, responding from his very heart to the call of Nature herself, and for the sake of that call, ready to neglect the niceties of systematic training

and the final touches of pedantic authority. For this we must be at once thankful and regretful. To the vagaries of George Morland we owe the value of his art as well as its obvious shortcomings. Nature was his academy, and he was unwilling to hide nature's ways by any code of convention. Whatever Morland borrowed from other artists, let us remember to his credit, especially in view of the irregularities of his life and habits, that while he was strong and careless in his art, he was never impure, never indelicate.

We picture Morland the artist leaving his father's home, and very soon afterwards abandoning his father's tradition. Henry Robert Morland is typical of the portraiture school of his age. He painted according to the tradition that he admired, and, in spite of successes, was more than once bankrupt. In all probability, after the fashion set by his 'strutting' wife, he was the least considered person in his household. George accepted neither his father's slavish worship of a certain school, nor his submission to petticoat government. One can easily conjecture that he was out for freedom in all directions.

If it is hard to trace the extent and influence of his early training, it is certainly quite as difficult to find very much evidence of his associations with contemporary artists.

Someone has said that the comparison between Morland the artist and Burns the poet is inevitable. 'They were the first to realise the inner significance, the intensity, the poetry, and the majesty of peasant life. They formed a school of which Wordsworth in poetry, Thomas Hardy in prose, Millet in painting, are examples of later followers. Both men were tall, handsome, with brilliant dark eyes, intellectual, if sensual features. To both men their fascination was fatal.'*

Morland's case, then, is one of aloofness. While we think of him as a Burns in art, or a Dickens in his love of the road and the Inn, a painter of the picturesque, we cannot consider him as the founder of a new school ; for, although he anticipates certain tendencies and certain artists of the 19th century, he himself had seen Gainsborough's landscapes, had manifestly examined Wheatley's gypsies, and had studied the previously named artists of the Dutch and Flemish schools. Morland stands rather as one of several artists, more or less contemporary, who were influenced by a widespread tendency. It has been pointed out that Wilkie gives us studies of peasants and homely life from a period before Morland's death and down to 1825. Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899) painted animals

* *The Connoisseur*, Vol. IX.

and scenes from actual life. Stubbs,* the animal painter and anatomist, gave his age numerous portraits of horses, dogs, lions, lionesses and tigers. He began to exhibit his pictures of animals in 1775, at the Royal Academy. In 1790 he undertook to paint all the celebrated racehorses from the Godolphin Arabian down to his own day, and he possessed a deservedly great reputation as an animal painter. Furthermore, Stubbs depicted rustic scenes such as *The Farmer's Wife*, *The Raven*, *Labourers*, *Haymakers and Reapers*, all of which were engraved. Passing from the past to the present, there is, as Nettleship asserts, from 1797 (with the exception of Wilkie, Bonheur, Landseer, and the two Herrings) 'a blank of at least seventy years, say till 1867, without any serious example of peasant life and animal life combined, or of sporting life.' This same authority goes on to show that to-day—a hundred years after Morland—he can point to many artists of high rank who work on their own lines at subjects connected with the soil, against one such in the eighteenth century (namely, Morland) and between the one and the many stand the uncertain links of Stubbs, Wilkie, Alken, Herring, Bonheur, Landseer and Ansdell. He argues, therefore, that Morland had no

* Hassell says that Morland admired and studied Stubbs' works.

direct influence on the history of his country's art either as regards the subjects he dealt with, or in the method of his painting, beyond, of course, that admiration necessarily aroused by the exhibition of pictures of really fine quality.* We shall return to this question in the following chapter.

Morland, then, carried on a tradition rather than inaugurated a new school; but we must notice that as soon as his pictures appeared they gripped popular attention.

It has been said that Morland, in large measure, owes his fame and widespread reputation to the engravers of his pictures. An examination of the splendid collection of engravings at the British Museum, numbering close upon four hundred, and the frequent exhibition of isolated examples in picture shops, substantiates this statement. The story is told of Morland's delight when, early in his married life, J. R. Smith offered him 12 guineas for a completed picture, and he celebrated the occasion with a glass of gin for each guinea received; we may assume that from that time onward J. R. Smith, W. Ward, and S. W. Reynolds were kept busy by this indefatigable artist. In 1803 William Blake engraved *The Industrious Cottager* and *The Idle Laundress*. An exhibition of 'upwards of three hundred

* J. T. Nettlehip, p. 37.

mezzotint engravings after George Morland ' was held in Great Portland Street in 1893, and these were all executed between 1780 and 1817 by numerous engravers, the most important being Smith, Ward and Reynolds. These men spread his fame, and copyists seconded their labours. Hassell says, ' I once saw twelve copies from a small picture of Morland's at one time in a dealer's shop with the original in the centre.' Redgrave tells of another dealer for whom, during several years, Morland painted under contract every morning, and who had each day's work regularly copied by painters employed for that purpose.

These facts tell but one story. The public loved Morland's work and desired it. What were the characteristics of his work that appealed so much in those days of portrait painting?

Morland's work may be divided into three categories: a series of scenes representing society life; his pictures of child-life; and that much wider and more important group dealing with various rural scenes. When he quitted his father's tuition and shelter George displayed his independence, as we have already noticed, by setting up in rooms at Martlett Row, Bow Street. Then he got into touch with Irish picture dealers, and it is said that he painted pictures of an immodest character. When we reflect upon

the purity of the themes of those pictures we know we feel strongly inclined to doubt the truth of such a statement. As we have seen, there are so many malicious stories told of Morland that one learns to be sceptical. A little later we find him at Margate, where Mrs. Hill had promised him introductions to patrons of Art. This she carried out, and Morland, in a letter of that time to Dawe, says that he breakfasted 'with a young gentleman. Some nobleman's brother but I forget the name.' This man was Mr. Sherborne, brother of Lord Digby, and he was much attracted to the young painter. Again, in France, we are told that 'Commissions for portraits were pressed upon him by gentlemen and Marquises.' When he returned to London and settled down to married life he produced a series of pictures for which it is clear that his wife sat as a model. In such pictures as *The Idle* and *Industrious Mechanic*, *The Idle Laundress*, *The Industrious Cottager*, the famous *Letitia* series, *The Fortune Teller* and others, it is plain that he was feeling his way in a study of life and purposely attempting to tell the tale and point the moral. Perhaps he felt the influence of Hogarth's work. We may consider such pictures as typical of one fleeting phase of his art.

Morland now seems to have turned to child life. This must have been at the

period of the birth of his still-born child, and the knowledge that his wife could bear him no more children. Accordingly, we view these pictures of juvenility with added sympathy, for we realise that they speak of the man's love for little children, of their love for him, and of a world of regrets and desires that lay in the heart and brain of the artist who portrayed so discriminatingly these perfect and natural little forms. He encouraged the children to come to him. They played around his easel as he worked ; he caught, as an elder person may do, the thousand little graces and extravagances of childhood which is always, in its healthy, normal condition, so unaware of its own attraction and beauty. His pictures show us children playing at soldiers, children knitting, children bird-nesting. We see boys robbing orchards,* and not far away an irate farmer in haste to climb a fence ; boys bathing, boys and girls talking, boys and girls in all the occupations of boyhood and girlhood. The *Visit to a Boarding School*, the *Visit to a Child at Nurse*—these and others illustrate this phase of his art. And it was this turn of his art that won forthwith the appreciation of the English public.

Once again, probably about 1788, and this

* In the *Boys Robbing an Orchard*, the boy stooping for his coat is a wonderful instance of Morland's power to convey the impression of movement.

time permanently and for his own greatness, we find Morland contemplating and carrying out a fresh conception. Amid the highroads of the country just outside London, he finds that rustic and roving life represented by the labourer, the yokel, the drover and the coachman. Their good-humoured bonhomie touches a responsive chord in George Morland and, moreover, as we shall see, happens to follow the trend of the age, the movement towards the Romantic, the desire to snap the bonds of artificiality that had for more than a century bound down the great genius of the British race. It is only sheer ignorance that thinks of Morland painting these taproom scenes, these inns and barns and cottages because he revelled in low life rather than so-called high life. He painted these scenes because he felt compelled to paint them; the age called to him and he obeyed its call. Unfortunately, his nature and habits were such as to become hopelessly affected by the life which now he sought. There are some men who seem in their day and generation destined by fate to become victims of their calling, some in Science, some in Literature, some in Religion, and others in Art. We can think thus of George Morland. He became among this rustic throng a popular character. He spent faster than he earned. He could always spare a guinea for 'any poor devil

who trudged the road.' He went to the White Lion at Paddington simply because he could meet there with drovers and with animals. If he could not paint in a room he would paint, and did paint, in a hay-loft, but paint he must. It was in his soul and had to find expression. Dawe tells us that Morland copied from Nature as much as possible, but when he was not free to do that he drew from that retentive memory which from boyhood onward much impressed the writer we have quoted. If he was asked later in life whether he did not regret the earlier and more correct methods of his art, he laughingly exclaimed : " What, making leaves like silver pennies ? " As we have remarked, Morland's pictures are the outcome of what he actually saw and are drawn from his close and peculiar observation of common life. As little as possible the rules of art, the convention of the day, and the lessons he had learned, were allowed to come between him and the scene he wished to depict. A picture of his in the Dyce Collection at South Kensington shows an ass walking along a winding road, and followed by a man and a dog. The figure of the ass offers a study of that patient plodding beast whose painted form is as compelling as Sterne's picture in words, while the dog radiates triumphant jauntiness and pride as he follows in his master's steps. In such

wise, Morland revealed his art and his view of life, the actual life of the roads.

Morland was at once the continuer and pioneer of that tradition in British art which depicted the life men saw around them. As we have just observed, he painted not only manhood and womanhood, but child life, 'rosy cheeked boys and girls, slim youngsters with long fair hair, frilled collars, short, cut-away jacket, tight little trousers, round eyed little girls in little soft white blouses, high in the waist, children who were our great and great-great-grandfathers and grandmothers,'*—natural little children, not impossible little cherubs with a point for a mouth and two moons for eyes; but real, lovable children. He painted the lumbering wain, and that newer feature of English life, the lightly built coach, rendered possible by properly constructed roads built under the influence of Telford and Macadam. He painted the village Inn, both from the outside and the inside, and thus gave us in art what Smollett and Fielding had already given us in literature, a record of these gathering places for English life of all kinds. He painted the red-cloaked village girl, the red-coated soldier, the red-cheeked country wife. He depicted the fisherman, the blacksmith, and labourers of all descriptions.

* Ralph Richardson; *George Morland*.

Morland did not make a display of the abominations of life, though he might easily have done so, but he is an idealist in his rural simplicity. These and other types of pictures won still more the heart of the public that, in spite of critics, is the ultimate judge of reputation; and Morland's pictures, by reason of their truth and simplicity, appeal and will continue to appeal more than the false sentimentality of later generations. James Ward says that when he himself painted rustic females, people used to say to him, "Why do you not make them more like Morland's?" George Eliot in *Adam Bede* voices this modern craving for the actual. "Paint us an angel," she says, "if you can, with a floating robe and a face paled with celestial light, paint us oftener a Madonna turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory; but do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house, those rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world."

There were three main theatres for Morland's art. London, of course, especially in its environs, claimed him throughout. But at times we find him in the Isle of Wight,

and again in Leicestershire, where he visited Claud Lorrain Smith, himself an artist. His reasons for going to both these more remote places were to escape debt and the dunning tradesmen. It is stated that his visit to Leicester opened his eyes to the more ecstatic beauty of nature untouched by the despoiling hand of man, while he was able to study gypsy life more closely. Long after Morland's active period it was possible to see about Camden Town the trees and ponds in the fields which he had introduced in the pictures he had executed while residing there. When he painted his picture of boys birds-nesting he went to Caen Wood and made a drawing of the trees and the rest of the landscape. But away from London he found more real and less sophisticated rustic life ; he saw nature with a glow and a grace that the approach of a great town banishes from tree and flower and bush, even as it brushes the bloom from the faces of boys and girls forced to live in its streets. In Leicestershire, in the Isle of Wight, he met with the essential truths of nature. He is said to have mixed with the lowest of the low, the scourings of fairs, any ' peculiarities ' of human nature whose appearance attracted him. This man, who declared that he would not cross the road to see the finest collection of pictures ever exhibited, lived with nature at first hand. With his

freedom, his resolution (he would walk miles at any time to make some special study), his powerful, artistic memory, he was able to produce, either in London or out of London, pictures that breathe the very soul of the country; yet we may assume that he especially loved to paint directly from nature.

All classes find from time to time their representative whose work affords a view of their life and character. George Morland chose deliberately to celebrate the English labouring classes. He comes into line with William Cowper, William Cobbett, George Crabbe, and Robert Blomfield. Blomfield tells us of 'The Peasant's Curse,'

That hourly makes his wretched status worse,
Destroys life's intercourse; the social plan
That rank to rank cements, as man to man :
Wealth flows around him, fashion lordly reigns,
Yet poverty in his and mental pains.

Morland was not of this class by birth, but he became a freeman of its privileges by preference. To understand all that this statement implies would involve considerable research, not only into Morland's life, but into the condition of English society at the end of the Eighteenth Century. This is no place for such a detailed enquiry, yet we shall do well to recall the difference between those days and ours. As Crabbe, with 'Dutch minuteness,' indicates in his

Workhouse, the poor were degraded by the circumstances of their lives: war had accentuated the degrees of our social scale; the poor were becoming poorer, the rich richer. The festering evils of the century had swelled up to a head. The multifarious sellers of gin (it is estimated that in the metropolis alone, exclusive of the City and Southwark, there were some 20,000 shops for the sale of drink) increased out of all reason. Gin, Morland's especial weakness, was seen in every tailor's shop. Journeymen as they went to work, purchased their half-pennyworth of purl.

History tells us of the violence of the old London mobs, as, for example, in the days of the Wilkes riots and the Gordon disturbances. The people were ignorant, easily swayed, and ready for all extravagances. Not only was their life debased, but their passions were uncontrolled. The common people of Morland's day were unrestrained and excitable. A writer on George Morland tells us of a Dutch lady visiting London about 1830. She happened to go into the street wearing a bonnet of a new fashion. Men and women collected round her and joining hands danced and sang a popular song of the day—'Why is my bonnet so blue?' The writer remembers seeing in London amid the extraordinary scenes of 'Mafeking Night,' a group of about twenty

burly navvies who were arranged in two opposing lines of which the members, alternating the dance after the manner of children at a party, advanced hilariously singing 'Here we go gathering nuts and may.' The scene was so unusual and so delightful that it has survived in the memory for twenty years. But a hundred years ago the labouring classes, amid the vice and wretchedness of English life, seem to have been ready to seize any and every chance of sky-larking. In Bayley's *Surrey*, speaking of Purbright, he says that if a stranger appeared in that district the inhabitants joined hands and danced around him. This was a practice called 'Dancing the Hog.' The point is this. The English poor of a century ago were not only poor and uneducated; they were also insufficiently amused, and they had a feeble moral perception. The people on the sea-border as described by Crabbe were bold, wilful, surly and savage. They were largely smugglers, pilferers, snarers, drudges, who augmented their slender living by stealing.* As we glance back to the days before the Municipal Corporation Act, we obtain a curious view of life, with its gross luxury on the one hand, and its acute poverty on the other. The

* See article in *The Leisure Hour* for 1881—a valuable study of the political economy of Morland's day. These few pages are based upon its facts.

mania for drink extended over all classes. Fielding in 1751 said that gin was the principal sustenance of more than 100,000 people in London. 'If the drinking of this poison be continued at its present height during 20 years, there will by that time be very few of the common people left to drink it.' Wesley and the Methodists fought against the practice of dram-drinking. Education, such as it was, was a luxury; for the poor it was purely technical. Young children and women toiled for the greater part of the twenty-four hours in wretchedness and misery, in mine, factory, and the open fields.

Now it was among the poor that Morland preferred to do his work and gather his inspirations. What does he show us? It is said that he viewed the world pictorially; that 'he realised but did not idealise;' he shunned the picture gallery, yet, to him, life around him was, so to speak, composed in pictures and hung up for view; he read little, but would spend hours in journeying to see the effect of firelight in a wood, or to study gypsies and their attire. There was too little sympathy in his nature for him to enter into and understand either the tragedy or comedy of life; but he saw life, if he did not see character. His value lies in the fact that he reflected the life around him. One example of his realism must suffice

here. A study of the rural poor, in *An Old-fashioned Winter*, shows Giles breaking the ice in a pond near his house, and lifting the water out in bucketfuls. If ever a black frost stole out from a picture, it is from this study of winter.

George Morland, then, reflects what he saw. But he only saw what he chose to see. Occasionally he sees life's wretchedness and paints it, as in *The Travellers*, in which he shows two old people on the tramp in the wintertime. The wind is tossing the old woman's cloak. The people are poor and hungry. But as a rule Morland prefers the robust, well-fed, rubicund rustic. He likes men and women about him that are fat. This Teniers of English art shows us labourers and fishermen that are remarkably plump and do not share that lean, healthy, open-air look we are accustomed to see in the physiognomy of their present day counterparts. 'His men, so far as I have seen them, are apt to be overgrown boys who have no muscle and are born idlers.'* These Morlands are wonderfully picturesque. A typical example of his labourer is seen in his picture *Horses in a Stable* (signed and dated 1791). The careful work in this picture shows Morland at his best. The horses are skilfully painted, and that peculiarly docile

* Nettleship, p. 42.

air one finds in the cart-horse is wonderfully depicted in this work. The light falling diagonally rests upon the white horse, and then upon the white-shirted 'gentlemanly' stableman, who is bending almost graciously over a barrow of straw from the heap on the floor. Well-fed, plump, and debonair, this man, with his handsome face and clean attire, scarcely conveys, one would suppose, a clear idea of the labourer of his type, but the effect is extremely pleasing, and that seems to have been Morland's notion in such scenes. The tonality of his pictures is superb, yet we gather from them a sort of pageant of smug, well-dressed, brightly coloured rustic life that saunters rather than trudges along the path of life. He seems deliberately bent upon subduing the hideous and the miserable, and clothing everything with a healthy contentment, so that he has been distinguished as 'a realist who did not descend to the gross depths of the modern school of *naturalistes*.' Like Shakespeare he upheld the modesty of nature—there is nothing morbid or immodest in his pictures. He refined and polished what life held that was coarse. Just as Sir Walter Scott changed the commonplace, so Morland substituted beauty and elegance where he found the ugly and the deformed.*

* Ralph Richardson : *George Morland*.

While all this is true, we are still accurate in speaking of Morland's realism. He loved the animal world and he painted animals of all sorts; at times in a literal sense he lived with these studies. They kept him company as he painted. With the horse especially he seems to have had peculiar understanding, so that it appears as though he realised beyond human limits the nature of that animal. He had in his possession heads of animals, which he preserved with the skins, for the purpose of studying them. But when he found himself in difficulties he went straight to nature to correct his views. Yet we must recollect that he deliberately avoided difficulty, and for that reason, rather than for any incompetence, he offers pictures of animals as well as of human beings that force us to recognise their inaccuracy. Of course, as money matters became more pressing, Morland dashed off his pictures at a rate that was injurious to his art, so that many a 'Morland' will present glaring faults that would disgrace a novice. When he chose to take pains, he knew how to give the world a masterpiece. He himself was delighted with the reception of the *Interior of a Farmer's Stable*. Accordingly, he resolved to paint a companion picture called *The Strawyard*. The task, however, irritated and tired him, and he was glad to finish

his labours, leaving a picture which is by no means the equal of the other. Still, even so, it is a work of high merit. His methods are seen more clearly in the picture painted for Colonel Stewart, which, having been promised for a certain hour, was completed by the appointed time swiftly, because the artist obliterated several figures, and deliberately introduced in their place a countryman in a carter's smock, and masses of shade and foliage.

There is a popular idea that the pig was Morland's favourite animal. He is truly the demonstrator of the pig, and most of his pigs are wonderfully lifelike—although there are exceptions which the student will meet with in his search. Yet the public has made a mistake in associating pigs especially with Morland's pictures. The sturdy rustic, sunburnt and rotund; the cottager's plump and handsome wife; inimitable little children; the various members of the animal world met with in English country life, even to the dancing dog; the cottage, the alehouse, the oak tree,*—these are Morland's as much as the most typical and successful porker of his brush.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Morland

* J. T. Smith in *Nollekens and his Times* says that Morland was the first artist who gave the oak its sturdy and peculiar character in landscape painting.

for his work. He lived in the days immediately preceding the era of the railway and the progress, as we are pleased to call it, of the nineteenth century. The countryside was still picturesque; the thatched cottage, the quaint signs, the rustic ale-house, the scarlet and blue cloaks of the people, the coach with all its accessories; in a word, that old English life, resisting in its last stages the encroachments of the age of machinery, was all before his eyes, and he saw it, and painted it for posterity. It has been said that Hogarth gave the world satire, Reynolds and Romney offered grace, Gainsborough painted portraits and landscapes. Among these and other artists Morland holds but a secondary place. Yet his especial virtue among all his faults is that he was the humble painter of humble things.* He saw this doomed countryside and the doomed peasantry, and, perhaps without in the least realising what he was doing, he perpetuated it in his art. That is his chief, his most excellent virtue.

Perhaps the least worthy side of his art is seen in a group of pictures which appear to have made a powerful impression at the time, but which, to a lover of Morland, only suggest in later days a period of digression and false endeavour. In a letter to his

* Ralph Richardson. : *George Morland*.

cousin in 1788 Cowper refers to his poems on the Slave question, and then characteristically remarks that he is glad that they are not published, for only one of them pleases him. Morland, like Cowper, was drawn by the trend of the age. *African Hospitality* does ample credit to his heart; but it does not uphold the reputation of the artist, although, at the time, such studies powerfully influenced English and French public opinion.

By the time Morland was forty years of age his genius had reached its zenith and declined. The tragic facts of his life account for this early loss of power. In the twenty years of his artistic output there are three styles which mark corresponding periods. At first his work is carefully studied from Nature, but it is too softened down in its effect. In the next phase we find that the work is less finished, but that a development of genius has taken place, and the artist's brush is much more free and vigorous. The last sad period offers ample traces of decay. The manner of his pictures is less pleasing; the craftsmanship has grown careless; it is evident that he is suffering from loss of mental power.

It may be that Morland's highest efforts are his landscapes. He loved the scenery of the Isle of Wight, and there was scarcely anything along the undercliff but that he painted it. His smuggling scenes are

especially commendable. The freedom from anxiety, the open and splendid air of the locality suited him, and restored him temporarily to his normal powers. But in all these pictures there is evidence of but slight invention or close study. We find hasty conception, the absence of a complete sketch, the evidence of work straight away upon the canvas, with brush or chalk, and sometimes not even that ; for it is clear that he started pictures with no conception of what he was going to paint, but just added to his initial strokes whatever chanced to come into his head as he carried on his work.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUALITY OF THE ARTIST: HIS INFLUENCE UPON CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS.

THE popularity which Morland seems to have enjoyed almost as soon as his pictures appeared on the market, and which he maintained throughout his brief career, may be explained in several ways. We are told that the public loved his representation of children, his studies of country life and animal life ; that they turned away from the engravings of portraits and revelled in these new engravings of the objects of Nature. Morland's fame was rapidly spread by engravers and by copyists. These things were realised by his contemporaries, and have been duly reported by them. They could not see the wood for the trees. Englishmen of a century after Morland's day can read into these facts a significance which has not hitherto been properly associated with this artist we are studying.

If we regard the subjects of Morland's art from the broader view of the great movements we see sweeping over Europe during the centuries, it is possible to think of him in

art as achieving almost precisely a similar work to that wrought by Wordsworth in poetry. Wordsworth, as we know, was not understood at first by the critics and reviewers. Morland's pictures appealed immediately to the general public because of their ocular demonstration. All through the eighteenth century, from the days of Parnell down to the days of William Cowper, there developed in literature a tendency towards the more natural, and an ever growing revolt against that artificiality which, introduced at the period of the Restoration, had been fully exploited by Dryden and by Pope. The general reading public as soon as it realised what the new men were teaching, cared not one jot for the opinion of the critic, but accepted whole-heartedly the poetry of the new school.

For George Morland, therefore, it can be urged that he appears in the world of art on almost similar terms. It was not that he was fortunate in introducing anything new, for as we have already noticed, other men had caught the same inspiration and were to exemplify this tendency towards naturalness more accurately and with greater powers. Morland is just a child of the period, one of the many who led the generation to Romanticism, that wide term which includes so much. George Morland differs from Henry Morland in his

exposition of art as Wordsworth differs from Pope in the realm of poetry. He belongs to an entirely different school, and our desire is to examine the qualities which he exhibits, to find out the nature of the seed which produced the harvest, and to ascertain, if possible, to what extent his generation absorbed his views, and inspired their descendants with this new conception.

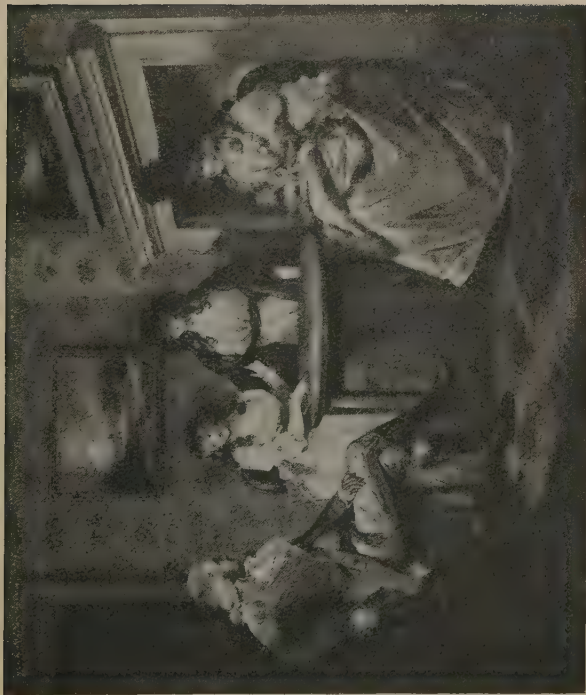
It is in the second period of his career as an artist that Morland definitely breaks away from the parental inculcation. The *Letitia* Series is justifiably singled out as remarkably fine, but it does not rank as Morland's most typical work. There is a demonstration of accuracy of detail, there are delightful feminine figures suggesting even the grace of a Romney, there is beauty and appeal—all of them hints that Morland with due study and training, and with his heart in the work, might have fallen into line with the greatest of painters who have won fame along the lines of historical painting, or of portraiture. Yet it is possible to read into the theme of these paintings much of Morland's attitude towards life. Most people take the theme of *Letitia, or Seduction*, as a serious study along the lines of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*, only with a much happier ending. The close student of Morland can read a different story. He examines the figure of the charming young girl cooped up

in circumstances which are supposed to be congenial, but which, indeed, offer very little attraction. He looks especially at the mother's face, and thinks "I do not wonder that the daughter was glad to take any opportunity of escaping from these unromantic, unimaginative people, and that great bouncing child, for whom, doubtless, she had to work without a mother's affection." There is an air of unreasonable and sentimental piety in that first picture that forcibly drives some of its modern onlookers into hostility. Morland, undoubtedly, had very vivid recollections of his own earlier days. He may have had in his mind a very different lesson from that which Sunday School moralists have so often extracted from *Letitia*. Smug religiosity, unsympathetic complacency, and ignorance on the part of parents, are more calculated than anything else to drive a boy or girl post haste to the devil. At any rate, it is hard to reconcile the facts of Morland's life with these so-called illustrations of sentimental piety. He was at heart a scoffer, and he was also, in spite of his lapses, a man of strong and virile nature. Brought up amid false ideas which were rigidly inflicted upon him, he rebelled, and escaped. In the *Letitia* Series, viewed cynically, he depicts as plainly as possible in the features of the parents (especially in the heavy,

vacuous, unintellectual feminine face) what may be accepted as the predominant explanation of Letitia's escapade. It is, therefore, possible to believe that he is revealing part of the secret of his own life, and that these pictures serve a double purpose, namely, to point out the course of temptation, and to show how the ignorance and self-centredness of the narrowly religious person may assist another person along the path to evil. Collins definitely states that the origin of the *Letitia* pictures arose as follows:—Some time in 1786 there appeared an excellent song upon the progress of a race-horse and from it a series of prints was engendered. Collins himself parodied the song under the title of 'The Kept Miss or Beautiful Sally,' to be sung to the tune of 'The Race Horse.' It was this song that inspired Morland to produce the six pictures of this series.

Other pictures of this period offer further examples of Morland's prowess with regard to what is pretty or sentimental, graceful or refined. The *Letitia* Series has, however, been indicated as one of the most delightful pieces of portraiture, one of the most exquisite and careful studies from his brush. One picture may be cited here as typical of Morland's early married days, and, for various reasons, it stands out distinctively as worthy of our special notice. *The Fortune Teller* in the Tate Gallery offers an

instance of closely finished and carefully elaborated artistic work ; while the management of the light in its incidence upon face, form, and object, is certainly different from his usual simpler methods. The green-papered walls decorated with landscape pictures and relieved by a fireplace with a high mantel-shelf, provide an attractive background. Nearer the front is a green-covered card table, about which are grouped four figures—a red-coated officer, and three female companions. One figure, that of a young and charming girl, is standing. The fortune teller, also young and pretty, is glancing with feminine intuition at the soldier, and, while her left hand points to the lady of his love, she indicates with her right hand the disposition of the cards which she is explaining. The mind reverts to other pictures dealing with this theme, as for example Frith's rustic fortune-teller on the village green, and the girl lover's scrutinising glance at her swain's face. To the right of these three persons sits another figure ; silent, observant, calculating, purely mundane, a middle-aged mother who contemplates the scene, watching like some skilful fowler the timorous, yet sure, approach of the victims of the snare. The common drama has been caught by the glance of genius and registered by the skilful hand of the artist.



Tate Gallery

THE FORTUNE TELLER

GEORGE MORLAND

The disproportion of the lower part of the feminine forms is such that if the fortune teller or the calculating mamma stood up she would be mostly legs with an insufficient body, yet one loses sight of this defect in the graceful folds of the dresses, the exquisite harmony of colour, and the flowing curl of locks of hair. The expression on the face of the young girl appeals urgently. This picture alone clearly shows how Morland, with closer study and better finish, might have achieved a success in the world of portraiture equal to that of his better-known contemporaries. The ability is so plainly present to do full justice to his powers.

In the year 1788 thirty-two finished pictures of his were engraved, and perhaps most of them were actually painted in that year. He was working, therefore, two years after marriage under the influence which had caused him to take that serious step, and *The Fortune Teller* is one of the most powerful reminders of this peaceful phase of his life.

Many of Morland's female figures have a strong reminiscence of the peculiar grace that we associate with Romney, and we cannot but recall in them the interest that Romney showed in the younger painter's early beginnings. *Diligence* is such a composition, although the greater variety of colour and elaboration of accessories, and the more emphatic handling of the light

effect make it clear that Morland was here, as in every case, unconscious of any outside influence, and was painting on lines of his own. In *Belinda: the Billet Doux*, the reminiscence of Romney is more marked, especially in the free grace of the attitude of the reclining girl, though the same characteristic of emphasis both in lighting and colour separate it from the source from which it seems to spring.

May it not be that in his early married life, with the grace and soft beauty of his young wife before him, Morland sought to recall the lessons of the great painter who had understood and sympathised with him in the cheerless days of his tuition at home? These pictures are plain evidence that at this particular point in his career Morland did make a serious effort to refine and, as it were, to domesticate his genius; but a streak of superficiality in him, which, in its slurring over of the sordidness of his themes drawn from low surroundings, constitutes a great deal of his charm, stood in his way here, for his 'refined' types lack vitality and individuality; even though it was plainly his wife who was his model, he could not make effort to penetrate into her character nor to realise the atmosphere proper to such themes, and so the phase passes, and he goes back to the easier way, that of seeing and painting the superficial charm, while he waded deep

in the underlying mire, of 'low life.' With the passing of this, the reminiscence of Romney fades as well.

One of the most interesting pictures painted at this time is the *Girl Fondling a Dove*. The figure of the girl is the same as in *The Fortune Teller* and *Belinda*, and affords us another study of Mrs. Morland. We see again the same beautiful, soft, brown hair. In this picture three touches of pink relieve the simplicity of the white dress. There is a pink ribbon on the hat, another round the waist, and the shoes are pink. The lower limbs offer the suggestion of lack of proportion. But the interest of the picture lies chiefly in the landscape. For clearness, softness, detail, and vivid light effect, this little view offers a marked contrast to Morland's subsequent work. The colours are not, so to speak, Morland's: they are so bright and yet so effective. While distance is convincing, and the light penetrative, there is something peculiarly pastoral in its effect. If the picture is painted in Morland's youthful manner, it is clear that there must have arrived soon after this work, from some source or other, an influence that banished completely this earlier style. There was, therefore, an earlier and a later Morland; and his earlier work is typical of that developing school of landscape painters who were anticipating the aims of a much later day.

However, in all probability Morland's attention was early directed to landscape. A selection from the Exhibition of his early work at the Royal Academy gives us this Series: 1773, sketches; 1778, two landscapes; 1779, *A Drawing with a Poker*; 1780, landscape; 1787, *Hovel with Two Asses*; 1784, *Fog in September*; 1786, *The Flowery Banks of Shannon*. Or a glance at a chronological catalogue of Engravings, Etchings, etc.,* shows for 1780 to 1791 such an order as this: 1780, *The Angler's Repast*; 1783, *Children Nutting*; 1785, *The Lass of Livingston*; 1786, *Tom Jones' First Interview with Molly Seagrim*; 1787, *The Coquette at her Toilette*; 1788, *A Visit to the Child at Nurse, Children playing at Soldiers, Children Nutting*; 1789, *The Letitia Series* (six pictures), *Dancing Dogs, Farmer's Visit to his Married Daughter in Town, The Visit Returned in the Country, Boys Robbing an Orchard*. These examples chosen at random are sufficient. It is clear, as one would naturally expect, that the phases overlap. Morland was experimenting, and, as Blagden tells us, as soon as he found that the general public especially loved one type of his work, he found delight himself in painting those pictures, and, in the summer season, constantly visited the Isle of Wight to gain inspiration and knowledge at first hand.

* See Gilbey and Cumming.

Blagden says moreover that when the dealers wanted him to paint these pictures of Nature they would deliberately raise a scare of bailiffs and pack Morland off to the country.

After this series of pictures of interiors we come to Morland's most characteristic period, in which he paints the open country and its inhabitants ; the pictures that clearly illustrate the call of Nature and Nature's children to one of the most wayward of Nature's family. As we think of this last and most striking phase of the artist's work, we find ourselves contemplating it, in its inception, as almost a violent transition from one form of conception to another. But it was the domestic pictures that were the strong exception, and Morland's main inclination had always lain along the lines of the natural rather than the conventional. And, if the change from the one to the other is definitely marked, we may easily imagine a reason ; and imagination is confirmed by fact. As Nettleship says, 'domestic jarring was also a considerable obstacle to that steadiness of conduct necessary to a man so deeply involved.' On Blagden's showing it came at last to this : Morland and his wife quarrelled every five minutes, and there were feuds between Morland and the Ward family. We have noticed elsewhere the tragedy of the still-born child. Morland's faults are too patent to hide or excuse, but

at the same time, one has to confess that probably for a man of his temperament, the open field, the sea-swept beach, the song of the tavern, and the mute glance of beast and bird were more inspiring and solacing than domestic brawls. Matrimony was indeed one of the steps that led Morland downward; but we may regard it as one of the influences that led to this display on his part of an ardent love for Nature and her ways.

If we may assume that the influence of Dutch artists had worked its charm upon the youth while under parental guidance, and had made itself felt in his work hitherto in pictures of interiors, we may claim that the same inspiration followed him to the fields. It is this Morland to whom we owe so great a debt. In his pictures there pass before our eyes the huntsman of more than a hundred years ago, the peasants, the gypsies, the farmers, innkeepers, coachmen, drovers, ordinary boys and girls. These figures were among their own countryside, along their own roads, a generation doomed as are all generations to be swept away by time, but, surely, a generation which to us is especially interesting as marking the remnants of a past in its final phase. With the nineteenth century we began to say farewell to so much that had been peculiarly English and to make our journey toward modern 'perfection.' Morland's brush

catches the signs and symbols of this fleeting day, and brings to our observation what the modern artist loves to trace in our later times: cart-horses, dogs and sheep, the ploughing, the reaping, the sporting, and the harvesting of the natural world, the picturing, as it were, of the very heart and pulsing life of Nature; and this was the gift which this almost solitary artist, in his day, offered to a grateful public.

Modern man is often perplexed when he considers the past and the present, and endeavours to take stock of his inheritance. There are times, when, in a mood of cynical pessimism, he is inclined to rail against what is glibly termed progress and deplore the irrevocable past. At other moments he sees the present in a better light, and exaggerates the pains and penalties of by-gone days. It depends very much upon the point of view one is taking. Morland's pictures remind us painfully of our losses. As we have seen, when he painted the *Interior of a Stable*, he was living opposite the White Hart Inn at Paddington, whither he had gone to study more effectively the ephemeral life that flitted up and down the highways leading into London Town—that coaching life described by De Quincey, immortalised by Charles Dickens, brought into historic fame by Spencer Walpole, and touched upon, again and again, in our

literature by the writers of its day. We stand before a picture by the hand of this man who so loved horses and horsey men, and we are delighted with the utter rusticity of the scene. There come to our senses sights and sounds and odours known by us in many a rural haunt and treasured as redolent of days and nights of peaceful holiday. Such a picture may, of course, represent scenes caught and made permanent by Morland in a visit to the Isle of Wight, or to Leicestershire; but one is aware that many of these rural spots are what the artist saw at Camden Town, at Paddington, at Willesden, at Hampstead.

It is then that we are inclined to estimate the debit and credit sides of our national stock. We have lost what Morland possessed. There is no doubt whatever of that. A visit to Camden Town by the North London Railway, or on the top of a tramcar or motor bus, will convince the traveller completely that what Morland saw no longer exists. Factories and chimneys rise forbidding where formerly stood barn and rick. Morland's country has gone.

We love Morland's pictures because he loved what he painted. Love is the link between our taste and that of Morland's generation—only we know more clearly what we love. Men lived before him and have lived since his day who have been better

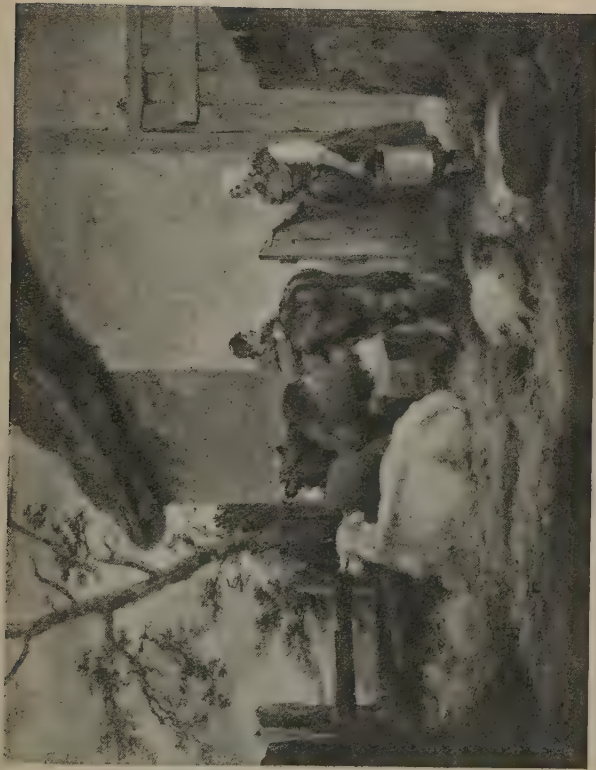
craftsmen, who have painted better horses, better dogs and better pigs, although, let it be remarked, Landseer was a great admirer of Morland at his best. It is just because we feel that Morland's pictures, superlative or indifferent, always speak of this love or sympathy of the painter for the things he painted, that we are admitted into the charmed circle of his personality.

We have space to describe only briefly one or two pictures typical of this side of his work. *The Roadside Inn*, painted about 1790, depicts a scene of country life in the gentle beauty of a mellow autumn day. The square greyish building, apparently a favourite type with Morland, with its swinging sign, is caught in a warm drowsy light. On the right side, the Inn is overshadowed by a group of trees whose foliage is here brightened by a glimpse of sunlight, there darkened with soft shadow. To the right of the trees and in the foreground of the picture rests a group of figures: a man, a woman and two children of the tramp class. The man, hat and stick thrown down, lies asleep on the ground with his head pillowed on his arms. Near by, pathetically patient, sits the woman. One child rests in her lap; the other, also watching for the man's awakening, leans against her knee. An ostler in a red waistcoat leads a white horse past the Inn to the stable beyond the trees.

The note of patient resignation visible in the figure of the woman is repeated more expressively in the figure of the horse, as, with drooping head and weary limbs, it submits to being led away. Two men, one on a white horse and one on a brown, approach the Inn from a hollow and hidden road on the left of the picture. At the extreme left of the canvas appear two dirty brown objects, two very unpiglike pigs, rooting among the rubbish. They have the qualities of a bad joke perpetrated by an evil genius ; but being almost of like colour to the background, they are, fortunately, not sufficiently noticeable to mar the picture.

Of the technique of *The Roadside Inn*, one can only say that it is a glimpse of Morland at his best, a piece of work finely conceived and, excepting the pigs, carefully executed and perfectly finished.

The Cowherd and the Milkmaid, painted in 1792, may have been intended by Morland as a companion picture to *The Roadside Inn* ; but it is by no means equal to it. The square grey house is again present, this time in the guise of a cowshed or a barn, and above its roof on the left hand side appear a few straggling branches of an untended tree almost entirely denuded of foliage. Two cows, the one white, the other one of a nondescript hue, occupy the centre of the picture. They are enclosed in a small straw-



Tate Gallery

COWHERD AND MILKMAID

GEORGE MORLAND

strewn yard, from which a stile, facing them, gives access to a meadow. The white cow is lying down; the other is standing, while across its haunches leans the cowherd, an untidy lout in a ragged jacket. Unkempt hair straggles through the holes in his cap, and judging the whole from the portion visible, one would say that he might be the original of the 'man all tattered and torn' in the well-known nursery rhyme. Coming through a grey-painted wooden gate, a pail in her hand, is the milkmaid—by no means the milkmaid of romance, but a thickset, heavy country wench, dressed in dull grey and blue garments. On her feet are a pair of enormous buckled shoes, more suited for the feet of some stout and hearty yeoman. The face, framed by a sunbonnet, is less gross than, but not proportionate to, the rest of the body; on the other hand, the man, though smaller than the woman, has features whose coarseness is unredeemed and unredeemable. The two cows are worthy the brush of Morland, two splendid animals, natural in every line, from the curving horns to the high spinal ridge and sharply defined flanks. The right of the foreground is occupied by a group of pigs. One white pig roots among the straw; two other pigs lie close at hand. The light falling on the barn is less warm than in the companion picture, although the straw in

the yard and the glimpse of meadow lying beyond the stile hint at sunshine. The brushwork is careless in parts, as though that haste which pursued Morland in his later years were already jogging at his elbow.

We must be content to deal but briefly with Morland's craftsmanship. He may be described as an idealistic realist, matter of fact rather than poetic. Speaking generally, he lacks refinement largely because he was dealing with unrefined subjects. But there is a vigour in his work which is distinctive, and perhaps it is that which suggests his deriving his inspiration from Dutch sources rather than from the artists of his own country. Unfortunately the facts of life caused him to hurry and 'dash off' pictures with an air of characteristic carelessness which, if life had been kinder to him, would never have been seen. According to Blagden, Morland studied the anatomy of animals at first hand. Others assert that he never devoted himself to the study of anatomy. To us it is clear that he does not seem willing to stop and consider effects—a few rapid strokes, and there was the outline. His eye catches some disproportion. Then it must be removed. But how? A smock frock for a man, a hat pulled low down over the face, a heap of stones to hide a man's feet, a truss of straw in front of a horse's head, or a trough to cover a horse's legs.

In a picture painted in collaboration with J. C. Ibbetson* there are two dogs; the nearer is drawn fully but stands so that the artist has only to paint part of the other; similarly with the two human figures. Of course this may have been necessary by reason of position; but it occurs so often with Morland that one realises that the position is due to no mere chance; it is purposely and deliberately planned. He stands his animals in straw to hide their defects. Moreover in the matter of light he seeks the more obviously easy effect. So often we find a strong light entering through an aperture and falling full upon the central figures, yet losing itself as mysteriously as an African river so far as the rest of the picture is concerned. Take, for example, *Innocence Alarmed, or The Flash in the Pan* and notice how the light which comes apparently from a window round the corner falls on the man, woman and child, the dogs, the beer-jug and the gun, while from another window light less powerfully touches the upper part of the figure of the woman stooping at the fire-place. But her lower limbs and certain parts of the room lie in unbroken obscurity. Very often it is unwise to study Morland closely. There are many of his pictures that will stand the test: but only

* Landscape by J. C. Ibbetson with figures by G. Morland. Collection of Sir Charles S. Hamilton.

too often a close examination shows juxtaposition of figures to hide defects, limbs utterly disproportionate, hands of impossible size, the feet of a giant, pigs that look more like horses, muscleless men and shapeless women. It need not have been. Morland had the powers, but he could not give himself the time to build up and finish his work. Rather than deal with a difficulty he removed it by some palpable artifice. Haste, carelessness, recklessness, yet all most clearly from the hand of genius. But if anyone cares to see examples of Morland's power in the matter of careful work, there may be studied at South Kensington two drawings, one of a sow with her young pigs, the other of two spaniels breaking through a hedge, which are masterpieces of painstaking production. Every mark is carefully elaborated and finished. Lines of the lightest and most refined nature are here, and yet one notices in the filling in of the foliage that same tendency towards rapidity which in the end achieves its result by mass rather than by detailed work.

For these reasons it is difficult to deal with Morland's work. He can offer, as Hassell says, the brilliancy of colouring of Cuyp, the truth and accuracy of Paul Potter, the grouping and placidity of Berghem—but, as life pressed upon him, these qualities are obscured. His brushwork

varies so much ; too often it is hurried, slap-dash, and abounding in evidence of rapidity of movement. He never made a complete sketch for the plan of his pictures, but threw his work, as it were, upon the picture. Criticism of Morland is difficult, for he was a man who differed remarkably from other men. He was so much more erratic. At one moment his brushwork may be full and strong, his lines may possess all Watteau's graciousness, his colour may be high and alluring in tone ; but for the most part his aim is to avoid high colouring and he leaves his tones to produce effect by solidity rather than by richness. It has been pointed out* that in his early days the colouring of Morland's pictures was low in tone, that later on it was heightened and distinguished by a grander and finer effect blended with masterly execution, but that the latest examples of his work show a heaviness in shadow and offer that rapid execution in which effect rather than detail is attempted. The heaviness of his colour and the frequent absence of atmosphere are due to the rapid, careless manner of his production. It is only fair to Morland to study him at his highest and best, for although throughout his work we can trace powerful conception and almost miraculous

* G. C. Williamson.

facility, yet we must remember how he was yielding daily to habits that demoralised his nature and warred against his artistic powers. His carelessness tended to devitalise his execution, and indolence lapsed into enervation. If we notice his choicest work we find that, as a French writer said, 'Nature lavished faculties of observation upon this drunkard Morland with both hands.'

In estimating Morland's contribution to the art of painting, we have therefore constantly to take into account the very varying standard of achievement due to the conditions under which he produced his work. We all vary in our capacity for work ; but one can imagine that if a graph could have been made to represent by scale Morland's moods and states, the rise above and fall below the normal would astound the reader of such a chart. Some of his work must be put aside altogether. Even in the midst of misery and degradation, however, there were moments when he painted with spirit and enthusiasm. A poetic strain, latent somewhere in his nature, coloured his vision. The scenes on which he had dwelt lovingly during those long rambles that followed days of close confinement and work, were reproduced by his faithful and wonderfully retentive memory, and invested by him with a romantic glamour which was not only characteristic of the

new spirit of the age, but also created in his best work an ideal rustic world that is not landscape nor figure-study nor *genre* but a combination of all these, and is what we mean by a 'Morland.'

Occasionally this artist painted pure landscape, such as that delightful view of a sand-pit in the National Gallery, that, in some ways, anticipates the Barbizon school. As we have shown, his earlier composition with female figures was conventional and less original than his rustic scenes, but it reveals a refinement one would not expect until the circumstances under which the pictures were produced are brought to mind. Morland's peculiar merits can best be studied in farm or stable scenes in which a rough-maned horse (very often, indeed, a white horse) or, perhaps, a sow and her young, and a peasant in a smock, with all the accessories of littered straw, pitch-forks, thatched roofs, and overhanging trees are combined into an essence of rustic picturesqueness. These are Morland's most charming qualities, and the *Interior of a Stable*, in the National Gallery, and, still more, that *View of a Farm* in the possession of Mr. Barratt show these qualities to perfection.

Morland derives from Gainsborough among English painters, but is fonder of interiors than his predecessor, who generally preferred

open-air scenes. Yet, like most of the English school, he is, as we have already noticed, akin to the Dutch painters of country scenes of the seventeenth century, and at times has even a suggestion of Rembrandt in some of his light effects, though these are less forced and dramatic.

There are those who criticize Morland's sea scenes, complaining of the woolliness of the water. At South Kensington there are two pictures of this nature that will well reward the student who visits them. The piece called *The Coast Scene* ought to be hung side by side with J. C. Ibbetson's study at the Tate Gallery of *The White Sand Quarry*. There is a similarity of craftsmanship in these two pictures. Scarcely any of Morland's pictures offer a view of such deliberately careful work, or manipulation of brush and paint. In a great open sky, the clouds ride majestically before the wind. The white chalk of the gap catches and reflects, as do the retreating clouds, the light streaming from the left. All the figures on the beach are elaborated with minute care, but the old woman in the red cloak trudging laboriously over the beach, and the dog leaping after her, are appropriately the central features. The one hurried piece of work is the woman's left arm. The picture is dated 1792.

The other is the large picture, *Sea-shore*;

Fishermen hauling in a Boat. If anyone wishes to test the criticism that Morland's pictures have no movement in them, or that the water is woolly, this study* will prove that, in regard to his best work, such strictures are unjust. The drawing of the men shows strain throughout. The actual strain is visible in the bare muscular arm of the fair-haired man, and it is carried along through the group, and along the taut rope to the fourth and somewhat diminutive man who, with rope over shoulder, is an emblem of strain itself. The muscles of his calf swell with effort. Over the massive boat (suggestive of Robinson Crusoe's abortive first attempt) one sees a leaping wave. The water is liquid, transparent, and the crest has broken into spray that actually leaps, while crest after crest of this pale, green water rises and falls along the stormy surface. A mass of limestone towers to the right. In the distance, across the sea, hills are seen upon which the lowering storm has descended and great cloud-wracks sweep ragged and menacing over the sky. The paint is so thinly applied that one can see the grain of the canvas beneath.

Precisely as one finds difficulty in tracing the effects wrought upon Morland by the teaching or influence of other artists, perhaps because, as Dawe says, 'his pictures owe

* See the Frontispiece of this volume.

their peculiar excellence to his long observation of common life,' we experience a difficulty when we try to estimate Morland's influence upon his contemporaries ; but it is a difficulty of another kind. His wayward and eccentric nature refused advice or assistance ; the distinctive character of his art could not, and even to this day cannot, be obscured. The difficulty lies rather in finding in the life of this most Bohemian artist the actual relationship that existed between him and his fellows. Most painfully did Morland stand aloof from the great artists of his day. We know that he associated and collaborated for a time with J. C. Ibbetson, J. Rathbone and J. Hassell ; but the enquirer finds very little that throws light upon their associations. It is said that a picture lent to the Grosvenor Gallery in 1887-8 was the joint work of John Rathbone and George Morland.* Collins, however, tells a story which shows how unwilling Morland was to impart the secrets of his genius. It is well worth quoting in full. ' One morning, about the latter end of March 1803, Mr. Collins went with one of his boys, a lad of about 14, to call on Morland who had previously seen the boy at the house of Mr.

* One of Rathbone's pictures at South Kensington is a view of a landscape with waggons and peasants. We know also that Morland painted in collaboration with C. L. Smith at Enderby.



In the possession of

VIEW FROM HAMPSTEAD

MORLAND AND IBBETSON

William Permain, Esq.

Collins, and taken sufficient interest to question him about his drawing and compliment him on his progress. This morning Morland happened to be in a good humour, and his brother took advantage of the favourable moment to gratify the youth's curiosity to see his brother paint. George was then at work upon a half-length landscape and figure. He was touching up the figure, and Klob (Morland's brother) put the young student close to his master's chair, who instantly placed him behind it, where he remained about two of the most pleasant hours he ever spent in his life, where he seemed to imbibe the essence not only of his manner but of the spirit of this his favourite master. After this never to be forgotten instance of George's condescension in giving some useful instruction to the son of a friend of more than twenty years, no one could induce him to give the young student more than one hour's instruction relative to his profession about a month afterwards. So very tenacious was he of communicating the smallest hint to any one who might hereafter enter into competition with him, no matter however remote the period.'

Such a man was Morland, and when we consider his life and the conditions in which he lived it is wonderful that he could have ever exerted any sustained influence over

any serious-minded student. He had five pupils who were desirous of learning his methods. Tanner, nicknamed by Morland 'Mohawk,' showed no great genius but subsequently earned a livelihood as a portrait painter. David Brown gave up his occupation of house and signboard painter to gratify his pleasure in watching Morland at work. With keen business insight he bought the master's pictures and sold them at a profit. Thus he purchased *The Farmer's Stable* for forty and sold it for over a hundred guineas. Similarly, he acquired *The Strawyard* for one hundred and twenty guineas. Upon leaving Morland he set up as a drawing master. His work in landscapes was exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1792 to 1797. Thomas Hand, who died a few weeks before Morland, in 1804, was one of the most promising of the five. From 1792 to 1804, on twelve occasions, he exhibited sporting and rustic pictures at the Royal Academy. The subjects of his works, such as *View in Leicestershire*, *Sandpits*, *Interior of a Stable*, *Gypsies*, show how he followed Morland. He, too, seems to have been led to profit by Morland's gross carelessness, for although a boon companion of the great artist, he did not hesitate to copy his master's works and sell them as genuine originals.*

* Bryan : *Dictionary of Painters*.

Another student is mentioned by Collins, but he does not give the name. Dawe speaks of a Mr. Cowden 'of the King's Mews.'

Of course the best known of Morland's students was William Collins (1788-1847), the son of Morland's biographer and destined to become the father of Wilkie Collins. William Collins was the boy we have just mentioned who sat behind Morland's chair. He was only sixteen when Morland died, and subsequently studied in the Royal Academy Schools and travelled widely, rising to the dignity of R.A. He himself denied that he had ever gained any great advantage from any instruction he had received from George Morland, but there can be no doubt that the early impressions made upon him by his father's friend had a decided influence upon his art. It is seen in various pictures, e.g. *Hall Sands, Devonshire* (1846) and *Bayham Abbey* (1836). He made the admission that English landscape scenery meant far more to him than the grandest scenes he had ever beheld abroad; and the student of Morland seems to see behind Collins' work the familiar shade of the earlier artist. In *Rustic Civility*, painted thirty years after his early instructor's death, one detects more than traces suggesting the manner, method and spirit of George Morland.

But Morland's influence upon his own and

succeeding generations of British Artists must be sought in other directions, and fortunately these are not difficult to discover. Almost from his first attempt upon new lines his pictures were wonderfully popular. For reasons already advanced, the public welcomed these representations of Nature. When we see Morland's *Girl seated in a Landscape and fondling a Dove*, we are looking at a pastoral in print, Daphne, so to speak, in petticoats, and condescending to adorn Nature's beauty with her charming and patronising presence ; but when we see one of his pictures of a real piggery, or *The Labourer's Home*, or *A Gypsy Encampment*, the pastoral vanishes completely and the real thing comes to our view. The public delighted in this return to Nature, and in the disappearance of Colin, Sylvia and Rosalynde. Just as to-day we know Morland mostly by the numerous engravings we see in picture shops, so the people of his generation gained their knowledge of his art. His fame was spread abroad by the hands of J. R. Smith, William Ward, E. Dayes, T. Gaugain, G. Keating, S. W. Reynolds, E. Bell, and W. Nutter. Among others William Blake engraved Morland's pictures. 'The five years 1788 to 1792 alone saw the appearance of over a hundred engravings after his work, and during his lifetime over two hundred and fifty separate prints were issued. This

forms such a record that probably Turner alone has surpassed such publicity. The grand total would now be difficult to reckon, for the present writer* has a list of over eighty engravers who have interpreted Morland's pictures in mezzotint, stipple, etching, and aquatint; and some of them are responsible for a dozen or two dozen subjects apiece.' Still we must recollect that the pictures themselves were much sought after, and were seen by a wider public. The advance in his price dated from 1792, when Mr. Daniel Orme, of Bond Street, purchased over a hundred of Morland's chief works, and built a shelter called Morland's Gallery where the principal personages in the land came to purchase these coveted masterpieces.

Through such avenues trod Morland's reputation, bringing, however, little pecuniary reward to the needy artist, for he lived before the days of copyright. The publisher made the profits. Morland considered himself fortunate if he earned as much as £20 for a picture. Mr. Hardie cites instances of good mezzotints after Morland's work that have fetched as much as £183 15s. for a pair, and even (in the case of *Contemplation*, by W. Ward) the sum of £252. The reader may be referred to the collection of prints

* Martin Hardie in *The Connoisseur*, August. 1904.

at the British Museum for a splendid opportunity to form an estimate of the beauty, number and value of these engravings after George Morland. But, considering the widespread influence of the pictures thus made known to the public, who can possibly compute the extent and radiation of Morland's craftsmanship? It penetrated everywhere, not only in the British Isles but all over the Continent. We have seen that Nettleship argues that between Morland's day and the later British artists who take up his theme there is a gap of some seventy years in England, and that during this period the chain of connection was being wrought in France, where Millet, who was born in 1814 and died in 1875, may or may not have been directly influenced by Morland, but shows strong resemblances in certain respects.

Now, it is well known that although Morland was in France for so short a time, yet after 1790 his pictures, with the engravings and mezzotints, were as popular in France and Germany as in England. During the years 1790 to 1797 his fame steadily and rapidly increased, until, 'owing to his admirable style,' his works were sought widely in most Continental countries. Undoubtedly Mr. Nettleship* is right in

** George Morland and the evolution from him of some later painters.*

claiming for Morland that 'he was a pioneer for those men who painted animal and sporting pieces, and was the first man of his day to see the paintableness of the life of his times in its outdoor and peasant or proletariat aspect.'* One admits all that, although, as we have seen, other artists were doing their work along similar lines before and during Morland's life. But one does not admit that it is necessary to leap over a gap of seventy years to find Morland's art creeping back in disguise to England in the work of foreign masters. The flood of Morland's pictures, in one form or another, was so wide and so persistent that one must search nearer home for influences of his style and method. For in our day, all over the Kingdom, we see on the walls of country homes, as well as of town houses, reproductions of this master. H. A. Vachell says in his novel 'River of Jordan' . . . 'There was very little furniture but all of it good. Some Hepplewhite chairs and a sideboard, a curious old Spanish mahogany bureau and a capacious cellaret of the same noble wood. Upon the walls hung a few coloured prints, mostly Morlands. . . .' That is the sort of thing to which we refer. Can this widespread representation have been without its effect upon Art?

* See also R. Richardson, quoted by J. T. Nettleship.

Ruskin mentions Turner's more or less 'respectful contemplation' of Reynolds, Loutherbouurg, Wilson, Gainsborough, Morland, and Wilkie, but does not go beyond that in his estimate of Morland's influence upon Turner's art. There is no intention of making any exorbitant claim on Morland's account, nor does the scope of this book allow of any extensive argument; but if any student of Morland cares to walk, for example, through the gallery of South Kensington, he will see many pictures that offer curious points of similarity to this artist's work. We may call such artists imitators of his manner. *The Wounded Soldier* by W. M. Craig (said to be a nephew of Thomson, the poet) who exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1788 and 1827, and *Highland Drovers* by J. Cristall (b. 1767 d. 1847) both suggest Morland's treatment and style in a striking degree. *The Market Woman* by William Walker (d. 1863) is also strongly reminiscent of Morland. In *The Gypsy Encampment* of J. Augustus Atkinson (b. 1775) we find also colour effect, tone and shade that, to say the least, are remarkably like Morland's work. Joshua Wallis (b. 1789 d. 1862) in his *Frosty Morning*, offers similar evidence to such a degree that we seem to catch Morland's potency in colour, effect and the very figures of the scene. La Cave's *Landscape with Horses at Plough and*

Figures was painted in 1806, and, perhaps even more than any of the works already cited, brings to mind the idiosyncracies in colour, figure and rendering of George Morland. In some of these instances there is more than a suggestion ; there is a strong flavour of the works of the master we are considering, and it would be comparatively easy to extend this short list until it included many other pictures which show either Morland's direct influence upon the artists who painted them, or else some other influence common to Morland as well as themselves, a suggestion that gains importance when we look at such a picture as F. Wheatley's (1747-1801) *The Dismissal* which has the very flavour so to speak, of Morland's work.

Girtin died in 1802. There can be no doubt that his landscapes suggest something of the Morland tone and spirit. He was asked once to make a companion picture to Morland's *Mail Coach in a Storm*, but, it is said, despairing at last in his attempt he threw down his brush saying that he 'could do nothing like it.'

We may, therefore, consider that Morland's style and influence, for the reasons we have named, worked far and wide upon the art of his day. Whether the painters just named, and others like them, caught his spirit consciously or unconsciously, does not matter. They may be regarded either as imitators of

his work, or for some reason or other joining with him to spread a common influence all over the country. For further interesting studies of reminiscences of Morland's subjects, methods, colouring and style the reader is referred to the following pictures at South Kensington: *The Ox Team* (R. Hill, 1769-1844); *Landscape and Haystack* (P. Nasmyth, picture dated 1831); *Horses and Fowls* (James Ward, 1769-1859); *A Cottage in a Landscape* (F. Stevens, 1781-1823?); *The Farm Yard* (Robert Dixon, 1780-1815); *Landscape with Mountains* (R. R. Reinagle, 1775-1862); *Gypsies and Female Rustics* (Lady Diana Beauclerk, 1734-1808); *Near Hastings* (Joseph Farington, 1747-1821); *The Lost Child* and *The Child Found* (Isaac Cruikshank, 1756-1810), etc.

But it has been definitely claimed that the following are those who were his direct followers.* It is not possible to elaborate this statement. It must be left to the reader, who, with the names and dates before him, can trace for himself the evidence of Morland's spirit at work upon his own and following generations. The names are these :

Henry Singleton (1766-1839), James Ward, R.A. (1769-1859) Morland's brother in law†,

* *George Morland*, by D. H. Wilson.

† James Ward tells us that Mrs. Catel, the wife of the proprietor of the 'White Lion' Paddington,

Sir Augustus Wall Callcott, R.A. (1779-1844), William Frederick Witherington (1785-1865), William Shayer (1788-1879), William Collins, R.A. (1788-1847), Thomas Webster, R.A. (1800-1886).

We must remark, however, that if students in their researches are able, pointing but to one picture, to say that in method and manner, composition and character, it suggests the influence of Morland's art and is the sort of picture he would have painted, then the statement that Morland's influence quitted England only to return in foreign disguise after a lapse of seventy years is sufficiently contradicted. But our claim is more than that. We believe that his spirit moved very freely, not only among his contemporaries, but also among those who were destined later to carry on the traditions of British Art.

afterwards married a favourite of the Prince of Wales, and was responsible for Ward's appointment as Painter and Engraver to that royal personage. Mrs. Fitzherbert was more than fond of Morland's pictures 'and, if Morland had been the man for it, there was an opening of the highest honours.' Ward also says that Morland painted the sign of the 'White Lion' and he believes that is the only one he ever did paint.

APPENDIX I.

A LIST OF WORKS BY GEORGE MORLAND IN BRITISH GALLERIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

NATIONAL GALLERY.

1030. Stable Interior (*c.* 1791). Canvas 53 x 79½.
1067. Quarry with Peasants. Wood. 7 x 9.
1497. Rabbiting (1792). Canvas. 34 x 46.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.

422. George Morland.
1196. George Morland. Chalk drawing.

TATE GALLERY.

1351. Door of a Village Inn. Canvas. 41 x 49.
2056. The Fortune Teller. Canvas. 18 x 21.
2639. Oustide the Ale House Door. Canvas.
13¾ x 10¾.
2640. Cowherd and Milkmaid (1792). Canvas.
20 x 26.
2641. Roadside Inn (1790). Canvas. 19¾ x 26.

WALLACE COLLECTION.

574. The Visit to the Boarding School (1788).
Canvas. 25½ x 28¾.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSING- TON.

(i.) OIL.

237. The Reckoning. Canvas. 29 x 39.
1403. -'69. Horses in a Stable (1791). Canvas.
34 x 46½.
1404. -'69. Seashore—Fishermen hauling in a
Boat (1791). Canvas 33½ x 46¼.

234. -'79. Coast Scene—Boats and Figures on the Beach (1792). Canvas. $8 \times 12\frac{1}{2}$.
 235. -'79. Girl seated, fondling a dove (oval). Canvas. $9 \times 7\frac{3}{4}$.
 541. -'82. Johnny going to the Fair. Canvas. $18 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$.
 1914. -'00. Hunting Scene. Canvas. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{5}{8}$.
 1915. -'00. A Farmyard. Canvas. $14 \times 18\frac{1}{4}$.
 Winter Scene—with woman and donkeys (panel).
 D. 31. Landscape and Cottage with market cart, dog, etc. Canvas. $16 \times 17\frac{3}{4}$.

(ii.) WATER COLOURS AND DRAWINGS.

- D. 726. Landscape with Figures (pen, tinted, signed). $10 \times 13\frac{3}{8}$.
 D. 727. Interior of a Pig-sty (pencil, signed). $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$.
 D. 728. Mrs. William Ward (*née* Maria Morland), Morland's sister. (Black chalk, tinted, signed). Circular, diam. $7\frac{1}{4}$.
 D. 729. Two Field Spaniels breaking through a Hedge. (Pencil and red chalk, signed). $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$.
 A.L. 6862. Heads of Sheep (sepia). In the Art Library. $8\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{7}{8}$.
 Portrait of Mrs. Morland (pencil). In the Art Library.
 Heads of Cattle (pencil). In the Art Library.

BIRMINGHAM.

600. Pigs (1797). Canvas. $28 \times 37\frac{3}{4}$.

CAMBRIDGE, FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM.

6. Encampment of Gypsies.
 13. Calf and Sheep.
 14. Donkey and Pigs (1789).
 19. Landscape and Figures (1) (1789).
 20. Coast Scene.
 531. Landscape and Figures (2) (1798).

DUBLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND.

206. Landscape, with Figures and Cattle.
Canvas. 21 x 25½.
2194. Group of Figures in a Boat (pencil and red chalk).

EDINBURGH, NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND.

789. The Stable Door—a Study. 15 x 13.
994. Fighting Dogs. Canvas. 25½ x 32½.
993. Selling Fish. Canvas. 23½ x 19½.

GLASGOW ART GALLERY.

- An Inland Stream.
- Sea-Coast Scene—Smugglers (1793).
- Storm and Wreck.
- Sea-piece.
- An English Homestead (attributed to Morland).

LEEDS, CITY ART GALLERY.

84. Coast Scene—Fishermen. Canvas. 25 x 30.
108. Hastening Home (attributed to Morland).
Wood. 5½ x 7.

LEICESTER, ART GALLERY.

65. Calm off the Coast of the Isle of Wight.

MANCHESTER, CITY ART GALLERY.

254. The Farrier's Forge (1793). Canvas.
28 x 36.

MANCHESTER, WHITWORTH INSTITUTE.

WATER COLOURS.

67. Bargaining for Fish.
68. The Artist's Sister (1793).

NOTTINGHAM, CASTLE MUSEUM.

140. The Artist in his Studio, with his man Gibbs.
141. The Wreckers.
142. A Study of Pigs.
143. The Sportsman Resting.
144. Two Horses in the Snow.
145. Landscape with Four Horses.

- 146. Two Pigs in Straw.
- 147. Landscape with Figures.
- 148. Woman, Child, and Dog.
- 149. Landscape with Cart Horse and Figures.

OXFORD, ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM.
Landscape.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY COLLEGE.

- 46. The Carrier Preparing to Set Out (1793).
Canvas. 34 x 46.
- 73. The Contented Waterman (1790). Canvas.
14 x 18.
- 74. The Press-gang (1790). Canvas. 14 x 18.

SHEFFIELD, MAPPIN ART GALLERY.

- 33. The Village Inn. Canvas. 23 x 30.

WOLVERHAMPTON ART GALLERY.

- The Coming Storm (1789).
- The Storm-cloud (1790).

YORK, CITY ART GALLERY.

- 98. Landscape with Gipsies. Canvas. 18 x
25½.

APPENDIX II.

LIST OF WORKS ON THE LIFE AND ART OF GEORGE MORLAND.

While the following list of books and articles is by no means exhaustive, it will indicate to the student certain lines of research which may be followed easily by reference to the Index and Subject Index at the British Museum and elsewhere.

A Driving Tour in the Isle of Wight. By H. Garle. 1905.

The Art Journal (1904). By H. M. Cundall. 1912.

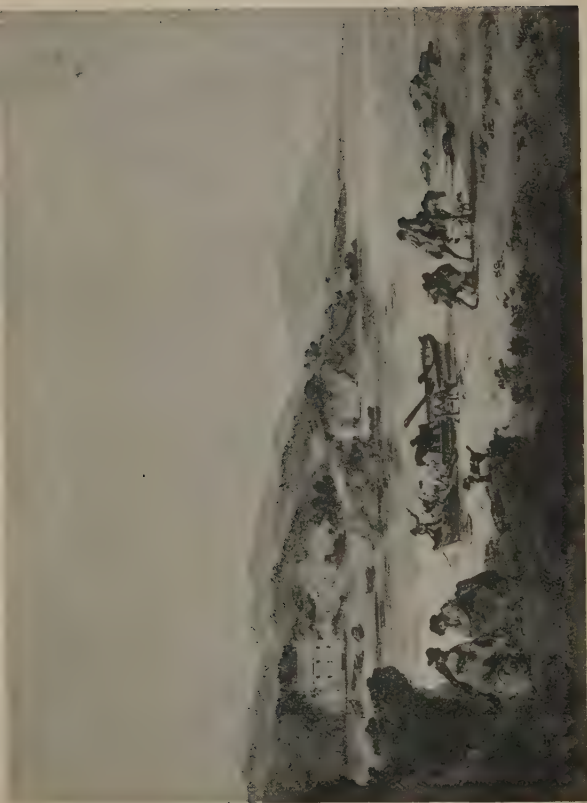
Authentic Memoirs of George Morland. By F. W. Blagden. 1806.

- A Biographical Essay on George Morland.* By J. T. H. Bailey. 1906.
- A Catalogue of the Morland Collection.* By J. Curling. 1856.
- The Connoisseur*, Vol. 9. By M. Hardie. 1904.
- The Connoisseur.* Articles in extra numbers of. By J. T. H. Bailey. 1906.
- A Descriptive Catalogue of Thirty-six Pictures Painted by George Morland.* By J. R. Smith. 1792.
- The Farington Diary* (1805), ed. J. Greig. 1922.
- The Life of George Morland.* By G. Dawe. 1904.
- Memoirs of the Life of G. Morland, with Critical and Descriptive Observations on his Works.* By John Hassell. 1806.
- Memoirs of a Picture—including a Biographical Sketch of G. Morland* (Vol. 3). By W. Collins. 1805.
- George Morland: His Life and Works.* By Gilbey and Cumming. 1907.
- George Morland and the Evolution from him of some Later Painters.* By J. T. Nettleship. 1898.
- George Morland: Biography and Criticism.* By Ralph Richardson. 1895.
- George Morland: His Life and Works.* By G. C. Williamson. 1907.
- George Morland.* By G. C. Williamson. 1904.
- George Morland.* Illustrated with twenty plates. (*Makers of British Art*). By D. H. Wilson. 1907.
- Morland's Pictures: The Leisure Hour.* Vol. 30.
- George Morland's Pictures: their Present Possessors.* By Ralph Richardson. 1897.
- The Printseller.* Article on the Engraved Work of George Morland. By Louis Cecil. 1903.

The reader is also referred to :—

- (1) *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers.*
- (2) *The Life of George Morland in the Dictionary of National Biography.*

IBBETSON.



In the possession of

THE FERRY

J. C. IBBETSON

Victor Riensacker, Esq.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

FLETCHER, in his history of Yorkshire, dismisses Ibbetson in a line or two as 'a painter of much note in the neighbourhood . . . who appears to have been something of an oddity.' What are the qualities which go to compose the character of an 'oddity,' this historian does not inform us; but in all probability the local rustic mind was pleased to smile at the eccentricities of genius.

Those who seek in the life of Ibbetson some 'racy story' wherewith to embellish their *repertoire* will be doomed to disappointment. It is admitted that at one period he plunged into that dissipation which was the curse of George Morland; but that lapse is more or less explicable, for, as we shall see, it followed upon a period of acute domestic and pecuniary affliction. For the rest, we read of him as being* a good, sociable, kind-hearted man, and very much respected. Many amusing anecdotes concerning him

* John Fisher's *History and Antiquities of Masham*.

have been told by the old inhabitants of Masham.

However, we know but little of the intimate details of Ibbetson's life. His parents were Yorkshire people, probably of the yeoman class. His education seems to have been sufficient to enable him to mix with gentlefolk and noblemen. His life resembles one of those underground streams which here and there sparkle out into the broad sunshine, and then, plunging again into the earth, are lost to view. Yet one feels, in looking at his portrait, that those unseen passages were clean, and that there is no justification for suspecting evil and corruption. Pilkington* briefly refers to Ibbetson as 'a native of Masham,' and states that 'he was liberally educated and studied painting for amusement; but rose to such eminence that his landscapes were eagerly sought for by collectors of the first rank.' This estimate was neither wholly accurate nor wholly inaccurate. Ibbetson had a genius for painting; a quality far removed from a mere inclination towards art.

Whence came this genius? There is no indication that Ibbetson's parents had artistic leanings, or were associated in any way with artists. Indeed, one receives a somewhat contrary impression. Yet the

*[*Dictionary of Painters.*

father, Richard Ibbetson, was a proficient and capable organist. Once again, therefore, we meet with this association of music and painting, and one suspects that the spiritual impulse for music in the sire was transmitted to the son in another form of art. We have noticed the association of the beauties of sound and colour in the lives of George Morland and George Romney, and it may well be that in many others these kindred talents have existed side by side.

One other artistic gift was accorded Julius Cæsar Ibbetson. He had in him the capacity for acting. While in Hull, at the early age of seventeen, he attracted the notice of Tate Wilkinson. Wilkinson was manager of the York and Hull theatres and a man of discernment. He had acted with Garrick and other notabilities at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and recognised talent when he saw it. He perceived in Ibbetson talents well worth the training, and, time after time, he tried to woo the youth from the easel to the footlights, but was unsuccessful in his persistent attempts.

Prior to his marriage Richard Ibbetson had been a member of the Moravian Community of Fulneck, Yorks. At the age of fifty he married a young girl of eighteen, and, as the tenets of the Moravian body forbade its members choosing their own life partners, Richard was formally expelled from

that rigid sect. Of the girl he married we know no more than that she was the daughter of Julius Mortimer, a farmer. In all probability she was endowed with all the virtues of a farmer's daughter, but these do not necessarily include an inclination towards art.

The child Julius Cæsar, for whom his mother gave her life,* was born at Scarborough on the 29th December, 1759. His father, who was faithful in mind to the Moravians, for he still attended their services and officiated as organist, entrusted the child's early education to that body. Subsequently, however, the lad was transferred to a Quakers' School at Leeds.

From early childhood Ibbetson had shown a decided love for art and a desire to use it as the medium of self-expression. His father encouraged him so much that on seeing an advertisement for an 'apprentice to a painter' the two lost no time in following up the opportunity. Ibbetson was still but a child when his father took him a journey of some seventy miles to Hull to interview the advertiser, a Mr. John Fletcher. Seeing that paint pots and paint brushes abounded, and trusting that all was well, the parent signed the articles for the seven years' apprenticeship of his son. But as luck

* His birth was Cæsarean.

would have it, Julius was bound to a ship's-painter, and, in a letter to Mr. West in 1782, he said that he immediately found that his occupation was only to get his master money by painting, from morn to night, the inside and outside of ships in the port of Hull.

In such scurvy manner did a mean and miserable fate score the first trick of the hand, and Ibbetson had no redress. The advertisement had stated quite clearly that an 'apprentice to a painter' was wanted, and if in his eagerness young Julius forgot that there might be various branches of the genus 'painter,' none could blame his master. Blame naturally enough falls more heavily upon the father's simplicity. Had it not been for the prospect of seven years' servitude the whole affair would have been laughable. The master was good-natured ; but an apprenticeship was an apprenticeship and there was no undoing the deed. However, this modern Jacob clung to the prospect of his Rachel, and, while painting ships for his master, continued to practise in secret his painting of pictures. Despite lack of encouragement he proceeded so far in his art as to secure several commissions for the painting of signs, which were duly admired.

Public interest was first attracted to him when, at the age of seventeen, after executing many fine designs for the ornamentation of ships, he prepared the scenery for the York

and Hull theatres, then under the management of the Mr. Tate Wilkinson previously mentioned. Ibbetson had touched the fringe of success—a poor provincial success, but sufficient to turn the head of the ardent youth, and inspire him with dreams of a not altogether unattainable fame.

In 1777, when Julius had but two more years of his time to serve, his master decided to sell his business and with it the services of the capable young painter. This was too much for the youth. Emboldened by his success he ran away from Hull, and, penniless and friendless, made his way to London. Here Fate again took a hand and introduced him to Mr. Clarke, a picture dealer of Leicester Fields. Mr. Clarke demanded a seven years' bond from him, and Ibbetson gave it ; but this time he was able to study and obtain a perfect knowledge of the methods of the Dutch artists. In the very same letter to West, in which he describes his Hull experiences, Ibbetson retails with humour, yet not without bitterness, the frauds perpetrated by the picture-dealing harpies of the art world.

At this point he received his first real living impulse towards art. He was engaged to paint a chest for a servant in the house of Mr. West, and there, for the first time in his life, he saw pictures which, in his own words, roused feelings that “affected his very toes.”

In 1780 Ibbetson married and removed to Kilburn. Of the lady of his choice, her personality, her character, her appearance, we know nothing. From the scant records extant he appears to have been devoted to her and to the eleven children she bore him, so that in all probability she was an estimable woman.

Ibbetson exhibited, in 1785, at the Royal Academy, a *View of Northfleet*. A little later he was introduced to Captain William Baillie, a well-born Irish gentleman who devoted his leisure to art and who became eventually a well-known amateur engraver and etcher. The introduction of Captain Baillie secured for Ibbetson an entry into the houses of the nobility. Mr. Tollemache, later Lord Dysart, invited the artist to spend a summer with him at Steep Hill, Isle of Wight. The outcome of that visit was a delightful little picture, *The Sand Quarry in the Bay*.*

With Lord Bute, Ibbetson passed through Wales and the West of England, spending much time in painting and sketching the surrounding country. Still, much as he enjoyed the holidays and the patronage of

* This picture, which is described at a later stage in this book, is at the moment of writing, stored away in the vaults of the National (Tate) Gallery.

the great, Ibbetson's art was gaining but little advantage, while his financial position was not benefited by these journeys. Accordingly when in 1788 Colonel Cathcart offered the painter a post as draughtsman in an embassy about to proceed to China, Ibbetson snatched at the chance and started for the East. Then fate again dealt another of her inexplicable blows. Colonel Cathcart died in Java, and the Embassy, deprived of its leader, was compelled to return. Ibbetson had lost a year's work and a year's salary. Long delays were experienced before he could even press for remuneration for the time spent with the embassy, while the material he had accumulated—his sketches of ships and sailors—was not immediately marketable. He was now in sore straits. Then, on the principle of kicking a dog when he is down, the firm for which he had previously worked began a legal action against him which further embarrassed his slender means. His friends, thinking to compensate him somewhat, secured him the offer of a similar post on another embassy about to proceed to China under the direction of Lord Macartney. However, the idea of a second voyage did not attract Ibbetson, and he declined the position, his place being filled by William Alexander, who had been one of his pupils.

And now on the well-scourged back another

blow was destined to fall. Mortality among child life was grievously heavy in those days, and Ibbetson's family was no exception to the rule. Eight of his eleven children had already died when, in 1794, his wife followed them. These accumulated evils brought on a severe breakdown, from which the prostrate man rose to find himself stripped of all he possessed by the very servants paid to tend him. Steeped in wretchedness and despair, he sought relief for a while in dissipation. Redgrave in his *Dictionary of Painters* says of Ibbetson that 'He was one of the jolly friends of George Morland, and like him, lived from hand to mouth; was employed by an inferior class of picture dealers and made them his pot companions.' This unwarranted view of a stricken man will be confounded, it is hoped, in the course of this narrative. Such glib expressions and judgments have, unfortunately, been only too easily made and accepted in the past. The bout of dissipation led, naturally enough, to further embarrassments, and in 1798 Ibbetson quitted London for Liverpool, leaving behind the duns and harpies who had preyed upon him. With him went his elder son; the younger was placed at school in Chelsea; while from this time until the girl's marriage, Lady Beaumont took charge of the artist's daughter, the father paying her school fees.

In Liverpool Ibbetson met Wm. Roscoe, one of the founders of a Liverpool Society for the encouragement of the arts of painting and design. Finding in Roscoe a congenial soul, Ibbetson corresponded with him for some years, admiring not only the man but also his love for his children and the domesticity of his life. Had the painter been such a toper as some writers have conjectured, the quality of domesticity would scarcely have attracted him.

From Liverpool Ibbetson passed to the quietness of the hills and valleys of the Lake District, where the poet Wordsworth, with his sister Dorothy, was also about to live.

In 1800, Ibbetson revisited Hull and was given a touching and pleasing welcome by those who had known him as a boy, some twenty years previously. Then, with Thomas Vernon, who had an exhibition of pictures at Edinburgh, he visited Scotland. The change gave him pleasure, and he received the patronage of the Balcarres family ; but, finding that he had no time for studying his art, he returned, in November 1800, to Westmorland.

It was at this time that Captain Flinders was preparing to make a voyage to New South Wales, and Mr. Charles Greville pressed Ibbetson to sail with him. He was to receive a fixed and liberal salary for three years ; and as a further inducement his

eldest son was to go with him, either as assistant draughtsman or ship's officer. The offer provided a tempting means of freeing himself from the parasites who still plagued him ; but, as though he had some prescience of the disaster which was to befall the expedition, he declined the offer, and remained in Westmorland.

The Farington Diary of 3rd November 1801 has the following entry :—' Ibbetson resides at Clappergate, abt $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from Ambleside, & that He was lately married to a young woman daughter to a weaver at that place who He had taken to be his servant. She is not 20 years of age. He is instructing her in drawing and,' the guide said, is 'very artful & ingenious indeed.' The painter, then, had found a consolation, and appeared as though he might settle down to the peace of a late summer in a little earthly paradise.

A tradition exists that while he was at Ambleside Ibbetson used often to wander to the valley of Troutbeck some four miles distant, there to enjoy the glory of the local scenery and the flavour of the famous home-brewed ale at the Inn.* In recognition of the merits of that ale he painted a sign with two faces, one on each side. Each face looked the part. One was a jolly-faced

* See *Notes and Queries*, VIII., New Series.

toper with rubicund nose, under whose lineaments appeared the rude lines :—

Thou mortal man who livest by bread,
What is it makes thy nose so red ?

On the other side appeared the face of a thin-lipped, lantern-jawed individual, the veritable picture of a modern teetotaler, with the couplet :—

Thou silly oaf with nose so pale,
It is with drinking Birkett's ale.

The painting has been removed and only a board with plain lettering giving the title 'The Mortal Man' remains ; but folk of the neighbourhood declared that the painting was removed to, and preserved in, Carlisle.

This is not the only instance by which one can see that Ibbetson was 'a bit of a wag.' He published an *Accidence or Gamut of painting in oil and water colours, illustrated by examples*. Some clever head and tail pieces etched by himself appear in the short introduction in which his pithy remarks prove him to be a humorous and clever writer. Elsewhere he tells artists to avoid picture dealers as serpents ; saying that they are to living painters as 'hawks to singing-birds.'* In the *Accidence* he said

* See Redgrave, *Dictionary of Artists*.

that he had collected a prodigious amount of material for a work to be entitled 'Humbuggologia,' which was to consist of anecdotes of picture-dealers, picture-cleaning, and pictures. Unfortunately the work never matured.

Shortly after her marriage Ibbetson's young wife, Bella, was called upon to support her husband under another loss. The painter had entered into a contract with Vernon, by which he was to send the latter for sale all pictures not directly commissioned. The money was to be applied largely to liquidating the outstanding London debts. From time to time small sums were sent by Vernon to Ibbetson; but about 1803 the painter discovered that Vernon had only given promises where he should have given money, and that none of the debts was paid. When, in that year, Vernon became insolvent, Ibbetson realised the position into which he was plunged. On this occasion his aristocratic friends came to his aid by securing him numerous and liberal commissions.

His chief patron, William Danby of Swinton Park, Yorkshire, invited him to reside near that place, and accepting the invitation, Ibbetson, with his wife and two young children, settled at Masham, Yorks. By devoting himself to his art, and by living quietly and economically, the painter was

at last extricated from the morass into which Vernon's defalcations had plunged him.

In 1817, while painting a picture of a favourite hunter for Lady Augusta Milbanke, Ibbetson caught a chill on the lungs. He failed to throw off its effects, and dying on October 13th of that year was laid to rest in the Parish Churchyard of St. Mary at Masham.

The second edition of his *Accidence, or Gamut of painting* contains an unsigned but apparently authoritative Memoir of the painter's life, together with a reproduction of a portrait of him, executed by J. R. Smith. The bust shows the full and somewhat fleshy face of a man in the forties. The broad, high forehead is half concealed by flowing wavy locks. The eyebrows are high-arched over eyes which have a gentle expression quite in keeping with the statement in the Memoir to the effect that Ibbetson loved domestic comfort. The nose as shown in the portrait is rather long, indented, and at the tip distended into wide nostrils. The face is clean shaven, except for the side whiskers fashionable at that period, and the mouth and chin are, therefore, fully displayed. The lips are full and tilted up at the corners, and the upper lip especially is curved after the fashion of a bow. It is a sensitive, rather petulant mouth, yet neither in it nor in the rounded chin is there any

sign of weakness of mind ; rather a warm-hearted lovable-ness, easy of betrayal. This same warm-heartedness led Ibbetson, in the dark days of 1796, while residing near Morland at Paddington, to accept bills and give security for debts on behalf of people who had no claim whatever upon him, thus opening for himself the path of poverty and flight which he trod in 1798. The expression of the portrait mentioned is that of a sober, industrious, clean-living man, a little pompous, perhaps, on occasion ; but certainly one looks in vain for the expression of a bloated, disreputable tavern-prop. In his own place of Masham, and on the lips of those who love a clean art, cleanly wrought, the name of Julius Cæsar Ibbetson has its due meed of praise, and, in the wider world, is slowly yet surely coming into its own.

CHAPTER II.

STYLE AND CHARACTERISTICS.

AT the outset of his task, the critic of Ibbetson's work meets one great difficulty. Very little of the artist's work is dated. Statements concerning his style and changes in his style must therefore be drawn from inference rather than from actual knowledge. The pictures painted in his maturity will differ obviously from those painted in his youth by the force of growing experience behind the brush.

There is no indication that Ibbetson received any art training whatever, prior to his apprenticeship at Hull. Indeed it is highly improbable that Yorkshire or any other provincial district gave permanent foothold to any artist sufficiently advanced in his profession to be able to instruct others. The Mecca of all artists was London, and Ibbetson was no exception to the rule.

His arrival in London brought him in his eighteenth year into touch with pictures painted by men of skill and long training, and experienced in the lore of definite schools of art. The years spent under the ægis of Mr. Clarke of Leicester Fields gave

Ibbetson a wide and intimate knowledge of the work of Dutch painters, and from this association he must have learned much of his technique. For the *Gamut or Accidence of painting in oil and water colours* he himself wrote a little introduction in which he said, 'It is from this period' (i.e., when working for Mr. Clarke) 'I must date the first knowledge I ever acquired of the mechanical part of painting.' Ibbetson is said to lack Morland's freedom of composition.* This fact may be partially explained. He was never able to throw off entirely, as Morland did, the influence of those Flemish and Dutch masters, the copying of whose works had occupied his brush at its most plastic period. Observe, however, that he speaks only of the 'mechanical' part of painting, which points to an assumption that he did not admit that he had been consciously affected or influenced by their style, but only that he had become versed in their methods of preparing canvas, laying on colours, and varnishing.

Unlike Morland, who lived for the most part unhealthily aloof from his fellow artists, Ibbetson associated with men of artistic temperament, with whom no doubt he exchanged ideas and views concerning art. Benjamin West called Ibbetson 'the Berghem

**Dictionary of National Biography.*

of England'; Redgrave* claims him as one who was inspired by the landscape work of Richard Wilson (1714-1782). It may be that Richard Wilson's pictures first aroused his zeal for landscape work, for a close examination of Ibbetson's landscapes in oil colours does lead to an admission of likeness in points to Wilson's work; even that little likeness is not necessarily the result of inspiration, but may be due only to a certain similarity of vision and treatment. May we not find in Ibbetson yet another of the children of the Romantic School, one who, like Wordsworth in literature, was filled with the growing love for Nature and Nature's ways, and, turning from artificiality, strove to enter into the secrets and beauties of that grand and mysterious outer world towards which mankind was again looking for inspiration? The English countryside became his living model and inspiration, breathing reality and vividness into the harmonious mass of his work. Once given the desire to paint landscapes, the artist would find contact with Nature sufficient to inspire his heart and hand. Those who declare that his pictures are too small forget that their small compass adds to their charm. On a large scale their wealth of detail would outweigh the harmony of the mass, while

* *A Century of Painters.*



Cardiff

National Museum of Wales

LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

J. C. IBBETSON

the firm, bold style would become but hardness of outline. The critic must find some stronger argument before he creates an adverse opinion of Ibbetson's work.

In 1780, when the artist married, he removed to the then delightfully rural spot of Kilburn, where he could give himself to the study of those rustic subjects upon which he loved to exercise his intelligent observation. There, too, he gained first-hand knowledge of cattle, horses and pigs, in which knowledge he was able to rival even George Morland. We find a touch of spirit in the animals painted by Ibbetson, and his best pictures are those in which animals constitute the principal feature. He pictures a *Landscape with cattle and figures*. One notices first the style of the trees, the detail of the herbage in the foreground, yet all the while one is conscious of a little group of cattle in the middle. The group does not force itself upon one's notice ; but mentally visualising the picture without it one feels a distinct sense of loss, loss of colour values, and loss of some indefinable quality which one can only call ' spirit.'

For the wonderful collection of pictures made by the painter for John Church's *Cabinet of Quadrupeds*, published in 1805, models must have been gathered from many sources, since it was well known that Ibbetson would not work from imagination but

only from what he saw. Referring to *The Kanguru*, the text states that 'The animals from which the annexed plate was drawn are now living in the Royal Gardens at Kew.' The Zoological Gardens had not yet been dreamed of; but 'the Queen's Menagerie' was kept at Buckingham Gate, and Mr. Tennant had a collection of animals at Exeter 'Change, London. Without doubt too, the painter made drawings of animals at the various ports of call on the expedition he accompanied to Java. The average man, however, is a better judge of the pig, the dog, or the horse, than of the elephant or long nosed monkey, and on his fame as a painter of domestic animals Ibbetson can rest secure.

Grave difficulty is experienced in examining the connection between the artistic lives of Morland and Ibbetson. Lack of real evidence closes every avenue save that of conjecture. Which one influenced the other, or were both of them under the sway of a third mind? If so, whose was this mind? Morland began to paint landscapes in 1788 in order to pay his debts. It is evident, from the similarity of certain points in the work, that Ibbetson and Morland were probably associated about 1790, and most certainly were associated by 1793. At any rate, in 1790 Ibbetson painted us a picture of Morland in the *Landscape with Timber*

Wagon and Wood-cutters Resting, a picture described more fully in the next chapter of this book. These two men may have been friends though not collaborators at that time. Hassell claims that Ibbetson influenced Morland ; and we know that the former painted landscapes for which the latter supplied figures and *vice versa*. The significant points are figures and tonal quality. When Ibbetson was engaged only on landscapes with cattle relief, then one can see a similarity to the work of Richard Wilson. No sooner, however, does Ibbetson turn to figure relief than the Morlandesque spirit of his work becomes distinct.

The figures painted by Morland exhibit a freedom of life, a sort of idealisation of the coarseness of the passing age. Those of Ibbetson betray a greater sense of reticence. The figures are slenderly proportioned and more accurately conceived as though the artist loved them and devoted his best skill to them, handling them with skilful finishing touches. Only once does the coarse-grained Morland figure appear in any Ibbetson painting we have seen. It appears as though, in the water-colour entitled *The Sailor's Return Home*, described later in this book, Ibbetson was trying to outstrip even Morland in his own particular element of life. The tonality of all those pictures in which Morlandesque figures appear is that subdued,

dulled quality which marks much of Morland's work. Neither man owed anything to the other in the ability to depict space and distance ; each one shows it to have been an innate power, developed in his earliest works.

Julius Ibbetson was certainly not a pupil of George Morland, nor, as we have remarked elsewhere, would the latter willingly allow another artist to receive light from his genius. Again, it seems improbable that Morland overcame his aloofness sufficiently to accept influence which another man might exert over him. One must be content to accept the fact that between the years 1793 and 1798, roughly, the connection between the two artists led, either consciously or unconsciously, to the interchange of certain potent elements of style and colouring. The power of these elements cannot be denied. They lifted the work of both men out of the common level, and gave impulse to succeeding generations. Collaborating with them were such men as John Rathbone, a native of Cheshire, born about 1750. Without training, Rathbone, like Ibbetson, rose to be a quite talented landscape painter, and was called by some 'The Manchester Wilson'—another hint as to Wilson's influence. As Ibbetson prepared landscape for which Morland provided the figures, so Rathbone's landscapes received their finishing touches from the hands of Ibbetson, and sometimes

of Morland. Unfortunately most of Rathbone's pictures were sold under names other than his own, and the extent of his connection with the other two painters is thus somewhat obscured.

The Dictionary of Contributors to the Royal Academy of Arts gives a list of some eighty-one pictures which were exhibited by Julius Ibbetson between the years 1785 and 1815. Up to the end of 1792 he seems chiefly to have dealt with scenes round about Kilburn, and exhibited such pictures as *Kilburn Wells—Morning*; *Kilburn Wells—Evening*; *Barn near Kilburn—Winter*. For the next four years his academy pictures were chiefly scenes from Wales through which he travelled with patrons, while the five subsequent years appear to have been devoted chiefly to scenes round his North Country home in Westmorland, together with little pictures which were drawn from experience gained on his voyage to Java. In the year 1805 he exhibited a portrait of his second wife, and also two pictures illustrating Burns' poem *Tam O'Shanter*. Ibbetson is credited also with the production of some historical pictures. It will be remembered that the painter was a man who read extensively, so that it is not improbable that some historical scenes may have fired his imagination; while his illustrations of Burns' poems show him in contact with the

development of current literature. He was not, however, a man of vivid imagination, and it may easily be supposed that these pictures were not up to the level of his landscape work. At any rate, one does not read of their being exhibited at the Academy, or of any collector hankering after their possession.

The painter contributed, as did most of the well-known artists of the day, several pictures to the Shakespeare Gallery originated by Alderman Boydell. The pictures were intended to illustrate the subjects of the plays and were usually painted on a large scale. Ibbetson chose for his subjects scenes between Katherine and Petruchio from *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Of Julius Ibbetson's influence upon other painters, the most noticeable instance is that of his one-time pupil William Alexander. This youth studied under Ibbetson, and eventually became a skilled draughtsman holding the post of Keeper of the Prints at the British Museum. By his work he attracted the notice of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who so far unbent as to encourage Alexander. The Gentleman's Magazine for October 1816 published a Memoir of Alexander, eulogising him in no uncertain terms: 'His chiaro-scuro was correct; his colouring was clear, harmonious and natural, and his figures were grouped with tasteful simplicity; his pencil was dictated by the judgment of

a highly cultivated understanding and extensive acquaintance with Art and Nature ; seldom indeed striking out any brilliant or novel idea, but uniformly attaining the more useful purpose of representing each individual character to the eye and thus identifying it in the mind of the spectator.' The care displayed by Alexander in his detail and his colouring, and the taste shown in his figure reliefs were, undoubtedly, due to the influence and training of the master hand. Indeed, the eulogy would very well pass for one bearing upon the style and work of Ibbetson himself, especially in his maturity.

In the village of Masham, the names of Julius Ibbetson and Richard Metcalfe meet with equal respect, although outside Yorkshire Metcalfe's name is almost unknown. The story of his youth, however, closely resembles that of Ibbetson and incidentally reflects credit upon that painter. As a youth, Metcalfe was bound apprentice to Mr. Bucktrout of Bedale, a house and sign painter. During the period of his service he evinced a talent for and an aspiration after art. When he had served his apprenticeship, he returned to Masham, where by this time Ibbetson had made his home. Ibbetson happened to notice the youth, and, remembering the difficulties of his own early days, took him in hand. He taught Metcalfe many things, directed his studies, and, further,

assisted him in the carrying out of those directions. The youth finally transferred his activities to Ripon, and his connection with Ibbetson ceased.

Contemporary with Julius Ibbetson was Sawrey Gilpin, the animal painter. By some chance Gilpin also worked for a ship painter until his sketches of animals brought him under the notice of the Duke of Cumberland, who extended his patronage to the artist. Gilpin's horses have the same spirited air as those of Ibbetson and they are also accurately drawn. The name of Gilpin is not associated, so far as one knows, with that of Ibbetson, but there is similarity of style in the work of the two men. Gilpin usually supplied the landscapes of George Barret with animal life.

The names of three other men come to mind when one is seeking to find some point of resemblance between the work of Julius Ibbetson and his contemporaries, or painters of the succeeding generation. The first artist is George Robertson, who lived from about 1748 to 1788. He studied landscape painting in Italy, and visited and painted in the British West Indies. He received little encouragement, but, looking upon such of his pictures as are exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, one cannot but notice a similarity of subject and colour to the pictures of Ibbetson.

The Isle of Wight landscape appealed to more than one artist in those bygone days. George Rogers, who exhibited at the Royal Academy between the years 1761 and 1793, lived there. His work has an acknowledged merit, but the points of resemblance between his work and that of Ibbetson may in some measure be due to their using similar models.

Julius Ibbetson was not destined to found a 'school' of painting, nor did he seek the adulation of unworthy pupils. His work was carried on quietly and unobtrusively, the proceeds of his sales being devoted to the liquidation of his debts and the keeping of his home in that state of respectable comfort beloved by the Englishman. The virtue of talent was in those days of even less effect, unless supported by money and influence, than it is to-day. Had the painter been highly ambitious, by playing the sycophant to those of the nobility to whom he had been introduced, he might have forced himself into the front rank. But he who could have been a planet remained a star, although a star of very worthy magnitude among the constellations of our English artists. It does not appear that Ibbetson was willing to follow up any of the openings afforded to him by his association with people of lofty rank. In this he resembles George Morland, and one honours these two British artists for their rugged independence.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUALITY OF THE ARTIST.

BY the year 1600 landscape painting, although formal in colouring and conception, was firmly established among the Dutch artists, and from them English artists were to learn how great a gift they had neglected. Convention demanded that foliage should always be painted in varying shades of brown; and with this colour the Dutch palette was loaded. The result of such treatment was a contrasted effect of light and dark in mass; but in detail the thickness of the brown masses caused a corresponding loss of charm and distinctness. From the Dutch came also the practice of painting animals as part of the landscape, yet at the same time making them distinct and complete pictorial values in themselves.

In the work of Ibbetson we find that charm which attracts the untrained eye as well as the critical mind. His oil paintings are individual and alluring: while his water-colours suggest much of the elusive quality of Morland's work. One recognises a Morland intuitively and instantly, and

even if we cannot say positively and immediately "That is an Ibbetson," yet we are compelled to say "That is Morlandesque only more delicate." In justice to Morland, however, it must be admitted that Ibbetson's pictures are not more delicate than Morland's masterpieces ; masterpieces of which unfortunately we see only too few.

The 'moralist' period of Morland—that time when he gave the world his *Letitia* Series, the companion pictures of *The Fruits of Idleness and Industry* and other such studies—finds no counterpart in the works of Ibbetson. His pictures are just pictures, and have no ulterior motive in their presentation. Further, Ibbetson never puts on canvas the figments of his own imagination, but painted only what he saw ; he does not attempt to paint what he has not seen. There are no mere space-filling devices in Ibbetson's pictures : everything appears in its place with a delicate and calculated nicety. No matter how small the picture, the finely proportioned form of human being or animal bears the stamp of reality, and asks with gentle insistence for our attention and consideration. Even when the whole of the canvas is not his own composition, this artist is yet able to introduce his creations with a masterly judgment.

Ibbetson's palette was the simple palette of an artist and master. He is described

as painting pictures in subdued colours which had a 'tendency to a clayey hue.'* This criticism is not elucidated by any explanation of the terms used ; an examination of Ibbetson's work, especially his water-colour pictures, shows clearly that the skill which so cleverly concealed, while at the same time it rendered those subdued tones clear and very distinct, was precisely the touch of a master hand deserving of close and understanding scrutiny.

Under a strong and vivid light, quiet tones of colour shade to insignificance, but in a normal light, dark masses show up with richness and depth of colour, and these qualities may be seen in any of Ibbetson's pictures, whether in water-colour or oil.

Two such pictures must stand as types of their kind.

In the National Gallery may be seen the oil painting entitled *Smugglers on the Irish Coast*, showing Ibbetson's work in its most typical form. One sees a wide expanse backed by hills, while in the nearer background rise rugged, towering rocks which offer marked contrast with the softened distance beyond, and the calm heart of an inlet or Irish lough. From a projecting piece of land a ferry boat laden with men and horses is putting off. But the eye

* Redgrave's *Century of Artists*.

wanders from the background to the nearer shore, where a widely scattered group of men and women are closely engaged in refreshment and conversation. A few red splashes here and there suggest military activity. The genius of the artist and his resemblance to Morland are revealed by the type of man, woman, and beast. The very attitude of these figures has caught the movement of life itself, the life of that class that both men loved to depict, open air existence, sturdy human beings among the passage of breezes and under the floating clouds of a sky which enforces the suggestion of width and broad expanse, and surrounded by Nature's harmonies. Consider the central group of men discussing some absorbing theme. Notice the woman in the reddish cloak who glances with truly feminine interest at another woman reclining on the ground, while, at the same time, she hears every word of the conversation of the men—that subtle gift women have of seeing closely and listening attentively at the same moment. It is life itself, whether of the 18th or of any other century. To the right are two men drinking healths. The one is seated on horseback; the other stands at his side. So realistic are the attitudes that one seems to hear the words “Here’s luck!” Interest, life, movement are all portrayed in this strong scene painted in dull, soft colours,

gently yet effectively relieved by the warm tints of human flesh and human attire.

There is also at the Tate Gallery another landscape study which at the moment of writing is only to be seen by the courtesy of the Director. Yet anyone interested in Ibbetson's work should not miss the opportunity of examining *The Sand Quarry in a Bay*. It is a superb little picture almost miniature in its impression (its size is 10 inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches), and affords a view of a peaceful bay bounded by rocks, and in the distance lofty cliffs which break seaward into snow-white and isolated masses, and, standing out along the horizon, bring vividly to mind the Needles in the Isle of Wight. Everything is marvellously distinct. In the bay floats a one-masted vessel which is being loaded with white sand. A rowing-boat, full of sand, lies rising and falling (so natural is the impression) near the beach, and is ready now to be pushed off. Two men, who have been at work with their spades, are standing near to one another, chatting while they rest. A third man, red-coated and partly hidden by the heap of white sand in the boat, is also conversing with them. Up above them rise clusters of jagged rocks, and a powerfully depicted breadth of sky over which clustering masses of white cumulus clouds are towering in the blue expanse. Near the shore, ripples and foam

are rendered with remarkable realism. The eye catches the sweep of the coast line, vanishing, curve after curve, into a clearly defined distance of white cliff, roofed by its green covering of sward. The white sand contrasts splendidly with rock, which is here dark brown, there rusty red. The boats do not rest upon the waters: they float. Small as are the human figures, in their limbs they are exactly proportioned. One may look right into the work, only to find that the more closely one examines, the more impressive is the craftsmanship of the artist.

In the foregoing illustrations of Ibbetson's work it will be found, as we have stated, that the brushwork is smooth and even. No endeavour has been made to secure effect by spreading the paint thickly and heavily over the canvas after the manner of some great artists. Indeed his paint is often laid on with superlative delicacy, and even where he is bent on securing a mass effect, there is that fine detailed finish for which his little pictures were so noted in his own day. This power of detailed finish brings to mind a picture now hanging in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is called *Rydal Bridge, Westmorland*, and is undated, unsigned, and on the mount is printed '? Ibbetson.' The study has points of likeness to Ibbetson's work, and points

which differ from his usual craftsmanship. Viewed as a whole, the picture is charming in its effect. A somewhat broken, single-span stone bridge crosses a little stream which runs over a few rocks in its passage under the bridge. The fall is so gentle that no fleck of foam marks its green surface. Beyond the bridge, hills and trees fade into the misty blue distance, while in the sky there are masses of cumulus clouds. On the right of the bridge two little cottages are overshadowed by trees whose deep mysterious shades of green vary with russet and gold as the light sweeps across the picture. Along the path before the cottages a man is leading a horse, and, nearer to the onlooker, stands a woman and a little boy. The picture is an Ibbetson in style and conception, and it tempts one to theorise. It may have been begun hastily, and then laid aside in order that the artist might fulfil some commission, but, unfortunately, never finished. It may, on the other hand, be a picture which was painted immediately upon his flight from London, about the year 1800, when, by reason of his trials, disappointments and free living, his hand had lost temporarily a little of its cunning, and his eye a little of its clear vision.

At South Kensington there is a picture entitled *The Mermaid's Haunt*, which although catalogued as being painted by

Ibbetson, does not compare in any way with his other works. It is difficult to assign it to any period : it may have been a piece of very early experimental work, or on the other hand it may have been a late experiment on a canvas which was not intended for the public eye. The picture shows a pool closed in by thick dark trees. Round the pool, and in it, the very terrestrial mermaids are bathing or busied with their toilet. On the whole we might term it an elaborate study of the nude. The figures are for the most part beautifully formed, though the faces lack grace and beauty. We do not hear of Ibbetson at any time painting from the nude, and yet, as we have remarked, he is said never to have painted from imagination : he painted what he saw. If the picture is an Ibbetson, it is at once a problem and a mystery.

It has been contended by critics that Morland stands aloof, and that he exercised little influence on his contemporaries. Apart from the suggestions already made in reference to this opinion in the section on Morland, let any student of Morland study the picture entitled *Jack in his Glory*, painted in oils by Ibbetson in 1795. It is a perfect example of a Morlandesque Ibbetson. Every stroke of the brush denotes the revelry of the scene which on the back of the canvas has been described by the

painter himself, the concluding words being *A real scene, painted by Julius Ibbetson, 1795, for Mr. Watson of Kingston on Hull*. The size of the canvas is roughly 18in. by 24in., a refutation of the criticism that this artist's work is always on too small a scale. A party of drunken sailors are being driven home from Peckham Fair when a whim seizes them. The coachman is bundled inside and the sailors, mounting the box, proceed to drive the coach. A stout clergyman, deprived of his wig by a sailor who, seated on the back of the coach, triumphantly waves the wig about like a scalp on the end of a stick, labours heavily behind. Under the trees two fiddlers lend their musical powers to promote discord, while a drunken man dances with two blowsy women. The scene is one in which Morland's heart would have delighted, and by some touch of sympathy Ibbetson also has caught the spirit. Morland would probably have dashed the scene off on to a canvas; Ibbetson studied the detail and the proportion of his figures with the result that they are more delicately and deliberately painted than one might expect from the nature of the subject.

However much like Morland's work that of Ibbetson may be, there is in the latter little of the lack of proportion which often mars the work of the greater genius. If Morland's figures tend towards grossness,



Victoria and Albert Museum

LANDSCAPE WITH WOODCUTTERS

J. C. IBBETSON

and his men resemble the 'stupid yokels' of fiction, it is possible that Ibbetson's figures may be somewhat too delicate; but they are none the less full of life and vigour and purpose. On the top of the coach in *Jack in his Glory* may be seen a swaying, vigorous figure, that of the sailor in his self-imposed glory of coach-driver. Two galloping horses require skilful handling, and there is no hint of lack of energy in the braced figure cracking the whip.

Let us hurry on to consider Ibbetson's water-colour paintings. First of all we must notice a picture called *Landscape with Timber Waggon and Woodcutters resting*. It will be remembered that earlier in this book reference was made to a certain portrait of Morland, standing with his back to the fire and his head tilted upwards. The same face, the same poise of the head, the same expression of 'cocksureness' is shown in the figure of one of the woodmen in this picture, only one seems to see on the face the passage of some ten years. Perhaps in some mad freak these two men did act as woodcutters, and Ibbetson perpetuated the occasion in this little picture with its portrait—for portrait it certainly is—of his friend and colleague. Still it is easier to imagine that for a few moments Morland sat as Ibbetson's model. This picture helps us to fix the date of the intimate association of these two

artists as somewhere about the year 1790. Only one face is seen—a face generously ruddy ; the face of the second woodcutter being hidden by his hat as he holds up his mug of drink.

In the majority of Ibbetson's water-colours it may be seen that where he has used pale, soft shades of colour for creating the effect of distance or for a certain atmosphere, he invariably brings in some note of brown whose very contrast of tone serves to heighten the effect of the paler tints, taking care at the same time that the note of brown shall not dominate the scene nor detract from the attention paid to the other details of the picture. The artist seems to have had in mind a series of tones of blue with which brown is contrasted. In *The Sale of the Pet Lamb* Ibbetson makes good use of his talent in subdued colouring. Two children in white are trying to protect their pet, while a third, in pink, is on her knees pleading. A butcher wearing a dull blue apron stands with his horse near the cottage, looking in a soulless manner at the children. Farther off the parents are seen, receiving from a man on horseback the price of the lamb. A dark cloud lowers over the cottage, and the wind shakes an old tree overshadowing it. The picture might be almost allegorical, the shadowed cottage being typical of the sorrow of the children. The sale of the lamb, an

event small enough, is to the youngsters little short of a cataclysm. The figures are intensely expressive and clearly defined ; one can imagine the cry of the children, and see the heartless butcher-man shrug his shoulders as he takes the pet away.

If it were in oils instead of water-colours the picture entitled *The Sailor's Return Home*, painted in 1795, would pass easily for a Morland. The tonal quality of George seems to have escaped from him and entered into the very touch of Julius. Those quiet shades and tones, the absence rather than the presence of colour, speak distinctly of this quality. The craftsmanship, too, suggests Morland here and there. The little lad leaning against the father just returned home recalls the better-known artist, and one is left wondering whether the child is happier because his father has come home or because he has a good, big piece of bread and butter to munch. From the parrot perched on the back of the wife's chair to the very natural cat rubbing itself in purring contentment against the sailor's leg, all is joy—a joy spiritualised in the old mother's thanksgiving to heaven for her son's safe return, a joy materialised round those comfortable guineas overflowing from the fallen bag on the table. Reeking of tar and rum, and important by the possession of wealth—temporary possession at any

rate—the great sailor holds court, while a negro youth and another burly sailor (who might be a character stepped out of Treasure Island) drag into the house a huge sea-chest containing the spoils of many lands. Through the open door one sees the masts of a ship with furled sails and drooping pennant.

Julius Ibbetson's power to depict ships so accurately and realistically was the fruit of his early years of labour in Hull. His ability to paint the sailor in all his moods, gay and rollicking, sober and steadfast, was a power derived from his earlier experience and nurtured while he lived on board ship on the voyage to Java. Another relic of that unlucky voyage is found in a picture entitled *False Bay from Wynberg Hill, Cape of Good Hope*. There the painter breathes out a spaciousness which he has not surpassed in any other picture. The land seems almost to flow down to the edge of a wide expanse of grey ocean, and above and beyond is the sky. The grey-blue foliage and sandy ground hint at a thirsty desolation; but looking deeply into the picture one realises how great is the amount of detail and how rich the depth of the shadows.

It is contended that the animals painted by Ibbetson are superior to those painted by Morland. This was not because Morland lacked the power to portray a perfect animal, but because in the majority of his later

pictures, he did not take long enough to study the proportions of the limbs. Ibbetson on the other hand seems to have drawn his animals with loving care. In the picture just mentioned, *False Bay*, a team of six horses draw a light cart in the foreground. Those horses are the very epitome of muscular activity. Despite their slender limbs they impress us with a sense of power. The two animals in the middle of the team have just felt the sting of the whiplash, and, with lifted heads and wide-flung legs, are indulging in a burst of wild energy. Only too often the painter of animals waxes sentimental and idealises his subjects. Landseer, for instance, paints sleek, well-fed animals, glossy of coat and proud of mien; one might almost call them 'society' animals; but Julius painted the animal as an animal and so left it. One sees precisely the same naturalness in the pose of the animals in the picture now in the collection of Mr. Victor Rienaeker and here reproduced.* One catches the sense of strain, as the creatures lift their feet from the sandy beach. When Ibbetson illustrated John Church's 'Cabinet of Quadrupeds' one might suspect him of having his tongue in his cheek. As illustrations the pictures have never been surpassed; but for each one the painter drew a little

* Facing p. 117.

topical background. The *Racehorse* is held by a jockey whose face is far too cherubic of aspect to suit his calling ; the slender little *Guinea Deer*, with legs no thicker than pipe-stems, are held in check by an enormously fat negro boy. A Hindu, clad only in loin cloth and turban, strikes a circus rider's attitude, while from a precarious perch on the neck he dexterously tickles the elephant into activity. As a last instance one notices the climbing goat, perched on mountains which have surely existed in no other place than the backcloth of the stage. With the foreign animals Ibbetson seems to show a slight touch of hesitation as to his methods of treatment ; but with the horse, the pig, the bull, the dog, he shows a perfect knowledge of his subjects—an understanding free from any false sentiment or idealism.

It is surely not often that the work of two men can be so placed upon one canvas as to hide their individuality of treatment. Yet this has happened with Morland and Ibbetson. The painters could work jointly on one picture and none be able to point to it and say : " That piece is by Morland ; that by Ibbetson." It seems to have been customary about this time for various painters to do ' pieces ' of work one for the other. Thus we get in conjunction the names Morland—Ibbetson—Rathbone, Ibbetson—Hassell—Laporte. Such workmanship,

although occasionally successful, more frequently was the reverse. In 1793 was published *A Picturesque Guide to Bath*, illustrated by aquatints, the combined work of Ibbetson—Hassell—Laporte. Hassell drew most of the landscapes for which the others supplied figure relief. Professional jealousy may have been at the bottom of the fact that Ibbetson's share of the work was very small. Yet on looking at the pictures one is not surprised. Hassell's landscapes are extremely stereotyped. If he pictures the river, then his tiny wavelets dance with the precision of little girls in an Academy dancing class; but with a stroke or two of his brush Julius makes us forget the background, while he catches and holds the eye with some little sketch of ingenious life; a ferry-boat, perhaps, comes into view laden with men, women and pack-horses. The ferrymen do not loll over their work, but act sailorwise in bringing their little craft smartly into place.

One more picture must be mentioned in connection with this book, the *Guide to Bath*, because it offers another instance of the influence of Morland upon Ibbetson, in this case in the year 1793. The picture is that of *Castle Rock*, and shows a small bay bounded by arched, hollowed rocks, so that through them a glimpse of distant country is visible. A rowing-boat has brought in

a party of pleasure seekers who are about to land. On one side stand two men steadying the boat ; a plank has been placed in position, and a young gallant is assisting a lady to disembark. She looks extremely anxious, with her puffed gown drawn well up out of harm's way. Another young gallant leads a second lady towards the plank. She is very coy, doubts her ability to make the perilous journey, and seems to invite a firm pressure of the youth's hand when she makes her brave attempt. A small dog, evidently weary of this human partnership, hangs in agitation over the edge of the boat. " Here," he says, " let me get out of this." It is a boatload of very expressive life. Nature, labour, and the eternal feminine are all combined to lure, attract and charm the eye.

Although we take leave of Julius Ibbetson as a portrait painter, apparently he did not seek to follow that branch of art. Such portraits as he painted, he executed, we are told, in a rapid and effective manner and this is confirmed by his portrait of Morland in the picture just alluded to. One presumes that these portraits were done either from motives of sentiment and friendship, or as commissions. In painting the portrait of John Smith, the celebrated Welsh Harper, Ibbetson is said to have fulfilled a Royal commission. Further, we read in the

History of Masham of his having 'drawn and etched from Nature' the portrait of one 'John Knubley, a barber.' With what pride and chucklings would honest John recount the tale as he lathered the chins of Mashamites, and how those chins would quake as John illustrated by a wave of the razor the sweep of the painter's brush! Masham knew Julius Ibbetson's work ere the rest of the world had awakened to the fact of his existence.

Loving Nature, men, women and dumb animals, Ibbetson is at his best when he expresses his feelings through the media of these subjects. At times he seems to have adopted not only some of George Morland's technique, but something of his moral tone. We catch a touch of cynicism here and there, a mingling of the spiritual with the material, an unconscious adoption, perhaps, or a conscious effort to equal in his best points the better known painter. No man, however, is at his best save when he is himself, and by being in the main himself Julius Cæsar Ibbetson has earned a place among artists as Wordsworth by persistence earned his among the poets.

APPENDIX I.

A LIST OF WORKS BY JULIUS CÆSAR IBBETSON IN BRITISH GALLERIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

TATE GALLERY.

1460. Smugglers on the Irish Coast (1808).
Canvas. $21\frac{1}{2} \times 33\frac{1}{2}$.
Sand Quarry in a Bay. Wood. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10$.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSING- TON.

IN OIL COLOURS.

- Tigers in a Jungle (in circulation).
247. Jack in his Glory (1795). Panel. $17\frac{3}{4} \times 24$.
The Mermaid's Haunt. Panel. $14\frac{3}{4} \times 19$.
377-'88. Conway Castle, N. Wales—Moonlight
Effect (1794). Canvas. $13\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$.
D. 56. Rydal Bridge, Westmorland (attributed
to Ibbetson). Canvas. $17\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{2}$.
972-'72. Landscape, with Rustic Bridge and
Stream.

WATER COLOURS AND DRAWINGS.

448. The Sailor's Return Home (in circulation)
(1795). $11\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$.
1752-'71. False Bay, from Wynberg Hill, Cape
of Good Hope. $14\frac{7}{8} \times 19\frac{3}{4}$.
45-'86. Landscape, with Timber Waggon and
Wood Cutters Resting (in circulation).
 $8\frac{5}{8} \times 12$.
163-'90. Cattle on Rocky Ground surrounded
by Water (1796). $10\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$.
119-'92. Ploughman leading his Horses Home
in Rain. Book illustration (in circulation).
 $5\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$.

- 138-'92. Landscape with Stream, Cattle and Figures (in circulation). $7\frac{5}{8} \times 10$.
 1716-'00. Landscape with Peasants. $8\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$.
 D. 775. The Sale of the Pet Lamb. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{3}{8}$.
 D. 4-'01. A Ferry. In the Art Library. $7 \times 8\frac{7}{8}$.

BIRMINGHAM, CITY ART GALLERY.

513. The Donkey Boys. Canvas. $15\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$.

CARDIFF, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES.

OIL.

Landscape, with Women Conversing. Canvas.

WATER COLOUR.

Menai Miners.

Menai Miners.

DUBLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND.

434. Landscape with Cattle. 14×18 .
 2168. Undercliff, Isle of Wight. Water Colour.

LEEDS, CORPORATION ART GALLERY.

229. A Farmyard, Otford, Kent. Canvas.
 $14 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$.
 230. Grosmont Castle, Monmouthshire. Canvas.
 $18\frac{1}{2} \times 24$.
 231. River Scene. Canvas. 12×16 .
 232. Types of Character. Water Colour. $6\frac{1}{2} \times 9$.

LEICESTER, CORPORATION ART GALLERY.

17. Landscape with Figures. Canvas.

MANCHESTER, CITY ART GALLERY.

203. Landscape with Ruins, Cattle and Figures.
 Canvas. 26×36 .
 204. Cave in St. Catherine's Island. Canvas.
 $12 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$.

NOTTINGHAM, CITY ART GALLERY.

76. Landscape with Cattle and Rainbow,
 Beeston Castle, Cheshire. Wood. $17\frac{7}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$.

APPENDIX II.

LIST OF WORKS ON THE LIFE AND ART OF J. C. IBBETSON.

- An Accidence or Gamut of Painting in Oil and Water Colours, etc.*, 2nd Edition. With a brief memoir of the Author's life and his Portrait. By J. C. Ibbetson. 1828.
- A Cabinet of Quadrupeds*, consisting of engravings from drawings of J. Ibbetson (2nd Edition). By John Church. 1850.
- A Century of Painters of the English School*. By R. & S. Redgrave. 1866.
- A Dictionary of Artists of the English School*. By R. & S. Redgrave. 1874.
- A Dictionary of Painters from the Revival of Art to the Present Period*. By Matthew Pilkington. 1805.
- The Farington Diary* (1805), ed. J. Greig. 1922.
- The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1817. Vol. 57.
- The History and Antiquities of Masham*. By John Fisher. 1865.
- History of Water Colour Painting in England*. By G. R. Redgrave. 1892.
- Notes and Queries*, 1st series, Vol. XII. (concerning Capt. Wm. Baillie, a friend of J. C. Ibbetson).
- Notes and Queries*, 5th series, Vol. III.
- Notes and Queries* for 1859. Vol. VIII. New series.
- A Picturesque Guide to Bath*. By Laporte and Hassell. 1793.

The reader is also referred to:—

- (1) *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*.
- (2) The Life of J. C. Ibbetson in *The Dictionary of National Biography*.



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